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## Inimitable?

### The Afterlives and Cultural Memory of Charles Dickens's Characters

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King's College London

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INIMITABLE? THE AFTERLIVES AND  
CULTURAL MEMORY OF CHARLES DICKENS'S  
CHARACTERS

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Thesis for PhD in English Literature

This paper is dedicated to the two doctors in my life who inspired me to pursue this  
dream: Martin England and Jenna Higgins

‘Any successfully evoked character, no matter how apparently insignificant,  
stands a good chance of surviving its creator.’

David Galef, *The Supporting Cast* (1993)



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## Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Full Title
<i>SBB</i>	<i>Sketches by Boz</i>
<i>PP</i>	<i>The Pickwick Papers</i>
<i>OT</i>	<i>Oliver Twist</i>
<i>NN</i>	<i>Nicholas Nickleby</i>
<i>OCS</i>	<i>The Old Curiosity Shop</i>
<i>MHC</i>	<i>Master Humphrey's Clock</i>
<i>BR</i>	<i>Barnaby Rudge</i>
<i>MC</i>	<i>Martin Chuzzlewit</i>
<i>DS</i>	<i>Dombey and Son</i>
<i>DC</i>	<i>David Copperfield</i>
<i>BH</i>	<i>Bleak House</i>
<i>LD</i>	<i>Little Dorrit</i>
<i>GE</i>	<i>Great Expectations</i>
<i>OMF</i>	<i>Our Mutual Friend</i>
<i>MED</i>	<i>The Mystery of Edwin Drood</i>

All citations from the twelve volumes of the Pilgrim Edition of *The Letters of Charles Dickens* are cited as: *Letters*, Vol.# [or Supplement #], p.#.

## Abstract

This thesis will examine how Charles Dickens's characters have enjoyed numerous afterlives beyond the original work in which they were created, ultimately seeking to understand better Dickens's legacy in literature through the cultural memory of his characters. I begin by looking at how the idea of 'character' has been presented in literary genres and in literary theory, using Dickens's *SBB* to illustrate how Dickens developed the literary genre of Character. Before looking at how Dickens's characters have lived outside of their novels, I will look at a few of Dickens's manuscripts and selected letters to see how Dickens originally wrote these characters. I will use Dickens's own words to try to understand Dickens's relationships with his characters and apply this to readers' relationships with Dickens's characters. I will then use terms and ideas borrowed from trans media studies (including fandom and fanfiction) to illustrate how Dickens's characters' afterlives create an archive of character; this means that the many adaptations and appropriations of Dickens's characters are all significant attributions of the 'original' character. Working from this idea, I will then look at how Dickens's characters materialise in things, memorabilia and household items, and how these things contribute to the character 'afterlife' not only in their visual representation but also in the choice of item in which they are represented. In the final chapter, I will use the recent BBC series *Dickensian* as a current practical representation of the direction of Dickensian studies and Dickens in popular culture; the basis for the creation of the show being Dickens's characters themselves. Ultimately, by considering Dickens's characters as archontic, allowing that their meme-like nature continually contributes to their archive and thus, every attribution in their afterlives is significant to how they are remembered even if anachronistic.

## 1. Introduction



**Figure 1: *Dickens' Dream*, by R. W. Buss (1875). Image© Charles Dickens Museum**

In this thesis I will argue that characters are the most memorable aspect of the Dickens world.<sup>1</sup> This I will show by exploring what I shall call the 'afterlives' of his characters, the various appropriations, adaptations, and reiterations of Dickens's characters beyond their so-called 'source' texts. But in fact, as I shall argue, these 'afterlives' are not *after* at all. *After* life presupposes the inherent authority of the first writing of the character by the author; however, what determines a character's persistence in cultural memory is the tension between their written creation with the

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<sup>1</sup> I define the 'Dickens world' as all things related to Dickens, his novels, and adaptations of his novels.

paratext of the character: together these create an overall construction of character.<sup>2</sup> In the case of Dickens, as I will show by looking at his own words as well as his characters outside of their texts, these characters' construction in cultural memory is *concurrent* with Dickens's authorial vision and thus these characters are not 'after' Dickens at all. But for the sake of simplicity, I'll use 'afterlives' to denote the existence of characters external to their original text.

In pursuing this argument I will borrow terms from critical disciplines that border Victorian literary studies, namely media studies, creative writing studies, and cultural theory, and by reinterpreting theories familiar to Victorianists like thing theory, others associated with reader-reception, and adaptation. By looking at Dickens's characters via these approaches we can illuminate the cultural memory of Dickens- that is an understanding of how the author, his writings, and his characters 'work' in a collective cultural consciousness.

Hence in this thesis I examine the interplay of fanfiction and source text, archontic texts- that is 'texts' that add to the 'archive' of a character or story, and interplay between academic study, fannish proclivities, and casual readership which begins to disassemble the barrier between canon and popular culture. These reading practices are then mirrored in the consumption of characters through memorabilia and household products. Cultural memory is the collective archive of the afterlives of characters, through text and commodities, and how readers of all interest levels interact with these afterlives.

As a brief introduction to some of these larger ideas at work in this thesis, I would like to look at a series of images of Dickens that inspired this project. Perhaps the most iconic of the portraits of Dickens, arguably even more so that the 'Nickleby Portrait' on display in the National Portrait Gallery in London, is *Dickens' Dream*

---

<sup>2</sup> 'Paratext' is a term borrowed from Gérard Genette which I will explain more in this introduction.

(Figure 1) by R. W. Buss. It is itself incomplete since, like Dickens, Buss died leaving his last work unfinished. The Charles Dickens Museum in London has, as well as the original painting, an animation of the image in which Dickens is seen actively contemplating his characters as they take turns moving within the scene from which they have been taken.

The portrait was begun after Dickens's death in 1870 and, along with Luke Fildes's painting *The Empty Chair* also from 1870, came to be known as two of more prominent 'memorial' images of Dickens. But, while this portrait is of Dickens, and indeed Dickens is one of the few more complete elements of the painting, Dickens himself is not what interests me in this image. What I love about this portrait of Dickens is that it is not only of Dickens but also includes many of his characters.

This image is not singular in its style. Leon Litvack describes these composite portraits as 'capriccio' images- an Italian style which means there is a mixture of real and imaginary elements in the picture.<sup>3</sup> Litvack describes this style of portrait as spanning back into the Renaissance and often meant to imply a 'divine inspiration' as often the creations surround the 'creator' or author with looks of adoration.<sup>4</sup> As writing became more secularised, these images were 'catering to the reading public's desire to see "authorial voice" as embodied in visual form'<sup>5</sup>; and the repeated representation of Dickens in this manner illustrated how his public saw Dickens as an artist. Taking this visual relationship of an author and his work as a starting point, I would also like to focus on the characters themselves.

Going back to Buss's painting, we can see that instead of placing Dickens in the centre of the painting and placing the characters in a halo-like construction around Dickens's head, or otherwise situated at Dickens's feet, looking adoringly up

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<sup>3</sup> Leon Litvack, 'Dickens's Dream and the Conception of Character', *Dickensian*, 103 (2007), 5-36. p.5

<sup>4</sup> Litvack, p.15.

<sup>5</sup> Litvack, p.16.

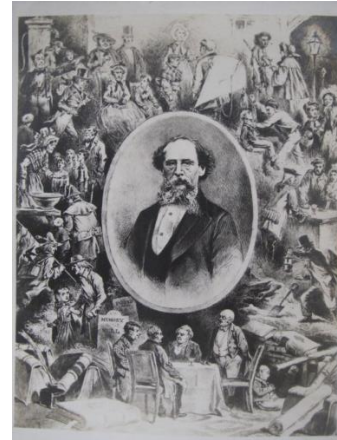
at him as in the statue of Dickens and Little Nell in Philadelphia (Figure 2), Buss has given almost equal weight to Dickens and to the characters. In fact, any felt imbalance in the painting is likely due to the incomplete nature of the painting.

In one of only three statues of Dickens in the world, Little Nell's relation to Dickens in Ewell's statue places Dickens's character in a seemingly contradictory position to her 'creator'. While Dickens was the real-life person and Nell the imaginary creation, the statue places Dickens in the position of icon while Nell is placed on level with the viewer. It could be argued, in this image, that Nell is represented as 'more real' than Dickens himself.





**Figure 2: *Dickens and Little Nell*, by Frank Ewell (1890, Photograph 1959), Clark Park Philadelphia. Image© City of Philadelphia Department of Public Records.**



**Figure 3: *Dickens and Characters*, by W. Reynolds (1864). Image© Charles Dickens Museum**



**Figure 4: *Mr Pickwick's Reception: Sam Weller Introduces to Mr Pickwick the Leading Characters in Mr Dickens's Novels*, by S. Eytinge Jr., pub. Every Saturday, Supplement to N.15 (9 April, 1870). Image© Library of Congress.**

After seeming to de-emphasise the prominence of the writer in *Dickens' Dream* compared to similar images of which Dickens is given centre stage as in Figure 3, it is not too far a progression to the removal of Dickens altogether as in Figure 4. In this image, Dickens is replaced by Pickwick as the object of celebration. It is Pickwick whom the crowd of Dickens's other characters parade by and acknowledge. It is Pickwick, not Dickens, who plays the role of the adored dignitary. The engraving was created for *Every Saturday*, a weekly journal in America, in which the first number of *MED* was printed. A short article on the 'cartoon' (as it is called) is also printed in the edition, commenting that Pickwick and Sam Weller are 'giv[en] the place of honor[sic], on account of their priority'.<sup>6</sup> The brief write-up concerning the article holds some key elements to understanding how Dickens's characters were received at the period; it is interesting to note that this image was published just *before* Dickens's death and therefore the image is meant as a celebration rather than a memorial. For instance, the article calls the characters in the image 'the mighty throng of celebrities' and 'old, and many of them very dear, acquaintances'.<sup>7</sup> The article goes on to describe Dickens's characters as a large family:

for all these personages, drawn from every grade of life, constitute one family [...] And a very remarkable family it is, each member of which bears unmistakable hereditary traits, and yet is so wholly distinct in character and action from his nearest kin that he runs no risk of ever being called by any other name than his own.<sup>8</sup>

The idea of Dickens's characters being related to one another, perhaps suggesting their 'common ancestry' as issuing from a common father- Dickens- is an interesting

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<sup>6</sup> Unknown, 'Mr Pickwick's Reception', *Every Saturday*, 15 (1870)

<<http://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015030765716;view=1up;seq=245;size=150>> [accessed 9 September 2015] (p. 227) The staging of this image reflects a common interest to early Dickensians, that of Pickwick and Sam Weller being favourites and 'original' emblems of Dickens's genius.

<sup>7</sup> 'Mr Pickwick's Reception'

<sup>8</sup> 'Mr Pickwick's Reception'



idea. Not only does it bestow another level of physicality on the characters, it suggests their being able to live outside of Dickens's control and lifespan, much like 'real' children.

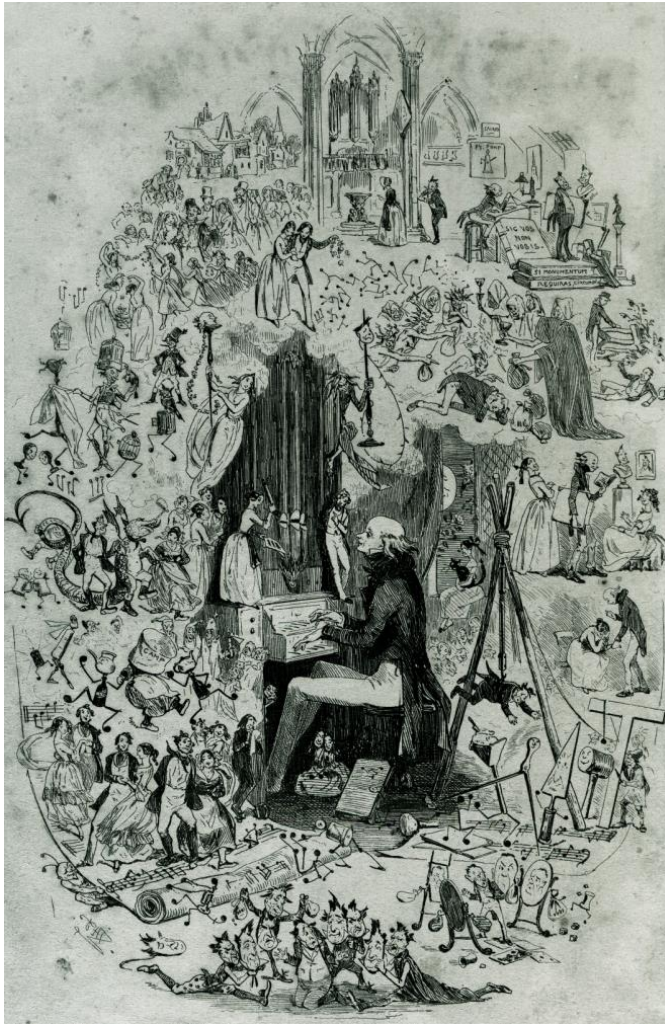


**Figure 5: *A Coaching Dream of Dickens (Waiting for the Horses)*, by John W. Houghton (1911). Image© Charles Dickens Museum**

Another image, again placing Pickwick centre stage, is *A Coaching Dream of Dickens* by John W. Houghton (1911, Figure 5). In this image, Dickens's characters spill out to the very edges of the scene. While Pickwick is still the central figure, the detail of the other characters, as well as the foregrounding of other characters besides Pickwick, creates a less diametric relationship between them than Eytinge's image. In addition, the artist has included an appropriate setting for the characters, a Victorian coaching inn. Dickens's characters populate the main courtyard as well as the balconies. However, not only is the scene full of the bodies of Dickens's characters;

there are other visual clues to the titles, settings, and plots of Dickens's stories (signs for 'Cheeryble Bros Merchants' and 'Jarley's Wax-works' are displayed at opposite sides of the courtyard, and an umbrella and case labelled 'somebody' are sitting on the top of the coach representing the Christmas story collection 'Somebody's Luggage'). Because Houghton's illustration has very little unused space, every character including the 'characters' of the inanimate objects, is represented in extreme detail; hence most, if not all, characters are recognisable. On the other hand, the Eytinge illustration, while mostly peopled by recognisable Dickensian characters in the foreground, uses the surrounding open landscape of the scene to emphasise the vastness of the 'crowd' of Dickens's characters. The characters receding into the background of the image, and this background fading into the horizon, shows that the entire landscape is peopled with Dickens's characters; the characters are not beholden to an enclosed Victorian setting.

For a final image, Figure 6, I would like to look at an illustration by Phiz from the original publication of *MC* depicting Tom Pinch at the church organ. Sitting in the centre of the image, Phiz has created a truly capriccio image relative to *MC*. Just as other artists portray Dickens bringing his creations to life, here Tom Pinch 'plays' alive scenes from the novel and others from his own imagination. In the Phiz portrait, Tom Pinch, a creation of Dickens, replaces Dickens but not in the same way as Pickwick; instead Tom Pinch is himself the creator. In being given an imagination of his own, the level of depth inherent to Dickens's characters is highlighted. As the frontispiece of the novel, not only has the choice been made to highlight a character who is not the namesake of the novel, but also the very act of creation has been chosen as a central image. As Pinch 'plays alive' the novel around him, Phiz and Dickens suggest the idea of a character having the same creative power as an author.



**Figure 6: Frontispiece to *Martin Chuzzlewit*, by Phiz (1844). Image© Charles Dickens Museum**

In these illustrations of the crowd of Dickens's characters, we see a visual representation of how captivating Dickens's characters were to readers. In these images, Dickens himself has ceased to be the god like creator of the characters that mystically dance around him as if in a dream. The staging of this and similar images visually represents a challenge to the idea of the authentic, original, or authorised- or at least, that is what I would like to propose. Each successive image builds upon tropes of how Dickens worked. These tropes can then begin to help modern readers appreciate the significance of Dickens's characters. Building together a visual representation of Dickens's characters and in real/imaginary and creator/creation



dynamics can help create a concrete illustration of what I will come to prove in the next chapters.

But putting aside Dickens for a minute, what is it about character itself that is important to a story or the life of a story? Character studies often position themselves from the point of the reader, that the reader is first and foremost the primary agent in the existence and the longevity of a story. Of course, it is obvious that a story or text ‘lives’ by being read. However, reading practices differ across history and cultures so that the continued life of a character might not be completely tied to the continued actions of the reader. I will elaborate on this idea later, especially when I come to talk about memorabilia. However, what I must first look at is the *beginning* of character. By this, I do not mean the birth of a character, or the creation of a character- as in the act of the author writing the story- I mean, the beginning of the character as a form of literature.

Hence, in Chapter Two I will look at how various historic forms of literature have created the idea of a ‘character’. From the literary form of ‘character’ begun in ancient Greece to the re-emergence of the form in eighteenth-century England to the French ‘portrait’ and finally the Victorian ‘sketch’, character has held an important place in literature well before and beyond the emergence of the novel. I will then look at how Dickens’s rich characters contribute to the genre of character and its similar forms and how, by looking at Dickens through this lens, we can begin to understand the importance of his characters in his work. After looking at textual examples, I will briefly examine how characters have been represented visually in art and illustration. Finally, I will look at how some literary theorists have examined character (as in E.M. Forster’s analysis of flat and round characters), the roles characters play ( as in Vladimir Propp’s analysis of folklore), and characters’ positions relative to other

characters (as in David Galef's and Alex Woloch's look at minor and major characters).

In this chapter, I will look at how Dickens himself processed his characters, how he wrote and thought about his creations. Dickens wrote in a letter to his friend C. C. Felton, that he did not dream of his characters. In another memory, he told a friend that he sometimes had to lock his characters in his study while he went for a walk so that he could get a little peace.<sup>9</sup> So, even though Dickens states that his characters 'have no real existence', they are certainly real to him.<sup>10</sup> The 'interaction' Dickens had with his own creations was further complicated by his public readings where he would adapt his own works to focus on certain characters (such as 'Little Dombey' or 'Mrs Gamp') or certain scenes (as in 'Sikes and Nancy' and 'The Trial from Pickwick').

It seems that, to Dickens as well as his readers, his characters were not just descriptions on a page, unadaptable and neatly tied up by the ending of their respective stories. Instead, they were like people, able to be adapted and have their stories retold and continued. However, the 'realness' of his characters quickly, almost immediately got out of his control. During some of Dickens's readings, a few memories and remarks of those in the audience were that Dickens did not portray Sam Weller properly, that he must not have known his own creation.<sup>11</sup> One memory by W .P. Frith says:

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<sup>9</sup> The memory of Dickens having to shut his characters in his study was told to James Fields by Dickens. Fields recalls this in Philip Collins's *Dickens: Interviews and Recollections*, V.2. This memory as well as others involving Dickens and writing will be discussed further in Chapter Five.

<sup>10</sup> This quote is from the same letter to C. C. Felton in which Dickens discusses dreaming of his characters. I will look at this quotation and other letters from Dickens in which he discusses his characters and his writing more in depth in especially the third chapter.

<sup>11</sup> George Dolby recounts the story of a member of the audience being deeply disappointed in Dickens's portrayal of Sam Weller; "Say, who's that man on the platform reading?" "Mr. Charles Dickens," I replied. "But that ain't the real Charles Dickens, the man as wrote all them books Iv've been reading all these years." "The same." After a moment's pause, as if for thought, he replied, "Wall, all I've got to say about it then is, that he knows no more about Sam Weller 'n a cow does of pleatin' a shirt, at all events that ain't my idea of Sam Weller, anyhow." After the delivery of this speech he

It seems a bold thing for me to say, but I felt very strongly that the author had totally misconceived the true character of one of his own creations. [...]I failed in being able to reconcile myself to such a rendering of a character that of all others seemed to me to call for an exactly opposite treatment. [...] When I determined to tell the great author that he had mistaken his own work, I knew I should be treading on dangerous ground.<sup>12</sup>

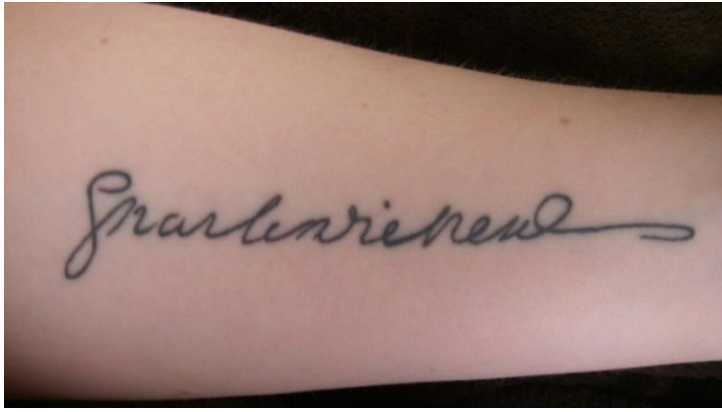
In this case, Frith prides himself on discussing his dissatisfaction with Dickens and hearing later, from a friend who attended another reading performance, that Dickens portrayed Sam Weller in a different manner. Whether or not Dickens changed his performance of Sam to suit the public response is unclear but certainly this is what Frith believed.

While we obviously cannot ask Dickens what he thought of his characters and their existence in cultural memory, we can look at the ways in which he talked about character to his correspondents, the way he talked about writing, and the way others remember his writing or performing his characters. I will attempt to glean Dickens's thoughts on the matter through using *The Pilgrim Edition of the Letters of Charles Dickens* and recollections and memories of Dickens by his close friends and family. I will decipher if there is any hint to Dickens's thoughts on character in a few selected manuscripts, looking at the process of his writing Mrs. Gamp, Dolly Varden, and Miss Mowcher.

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clapped his hat on his head, and left the building in a state of high dudgeon.' ( George Dolby, *Charles Dickens as I knew Him: The Story of the Reading Tours in Great Britain and America (1866-1870)* (London: T Fisher Unwin, 1887). pp.175-176).

<sup>12</sup> *Dickens: Interviews and Recollections, V.1*, ed. by Philip Collins (London: Macmillan Press, 1981), I. pp.49-50.



**Figure 7: Tattoo of Dickens's last used signature. Image© Maureen England.**

This image (Figure 7) introduces the next argument I will develop in this thesis, that fandom's appropriation of Dickens and his characters can be equally as useful in understanding how Dickens is remembered as any more orthodox historicist methodology. In other words, a subjective fan appropriation of a character can contribute equally to the archontic memory of that character as can an ostensibly more 'objective' academic analysis. Inscribing Dickens's signature onto my arm permanently illustrates that I am a fan of Dickens as well as an academic; I am an aca-fan (a term I will come to explain in Chapter Four). The idea of copying a signature also presents the interesting conundrum that not only *can* Dickens be copied- that he is not truly inimitable- but also that his very memory is inexorably tied to him being copied and re-inscribed.

For many, using terms like fan, fandom, and fanfiction also suggest an anachronistic approach to analysis of historic authors. While these terms may not be contemporary with Dickens's productions, practices of fandom and fan cultures are acknowledged in various appropriations by critics who are still resistant to using anachronistic terms.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> However, this resistance is changing. Much work has been done in the early twenty-first century on Dickens and mass media and Dickens in the digital world. Online reading projects and participatory

Dickens's readers found a number of ways of bringing Dickens's characters to life while he was alive, much like present-day fans do by writing fanfiction. He was plagued with plagiarists for example, who were performing his characters on the stage and rewriting them in monthly print instalments before the novels were even finished. The fourth chapter of this dissertation will argue that these writings can be seen as a form of fanfiction. If we look not at the aims and motivations of the writers and performers of these pieces- which were, most probably, financial- but at how these appropriations were received.

It is in the very practice of reimagining and 're-using' Dickens's characters that Dickens is remembered. This circle of use and memory is what Brewer and others would describe as a 'feedback loop.'<sup>14</sup> David Brewer explains feedback loops in his look at the various 'imaginative expansions' of eighteenth-century and Georgian texts; he explains, 'characters came to seem more socially canonical and desirable as they came to seem more common and used by all, which in turn enhanced their value and publicity that much more'.<sup>15</sup> In other words, the more a text was popular in its culture, the more it was appropriated and reimagined and thus again, the more the original was read. (You might say, 'there's no such thing as bad publicity'.)

This 'feedback loop' is similarly explained by Abigail Derecho's understanding of 'archontic' texts and Gerard Genette's definition of paratexts. These concepts can be understood by thinking that the more a character 'lives' in cultural memory, whether or not that memory is of its original, then that character is more likely to survive in cultural memory. Dickens's characters are remembered so well precisely because they are able to live so freely outside their novels. Paul Davis describes this

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digital projects such as the Our Mutual Friend Twitter Project conducted by Emma Curry and Ben Winyard from Birkbeck University of London, are changing attitudes to Dickens's place in the modern digital works. More about this project can be found at <http://dickensourmutualfriend.wordpress.com>

<sup>14</sup> David A. Brewer, *The Afterlife of Character 1726-1825* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005). p.14

<sup>15</sup> Brewer, p.14.



difference between original text and afterlives as the difference between ‘text’ and ‘culture-text’; the culture-text being the ‘remembered’ version which differs, sometimes substantially, from the original creation by the original author.<sup>16</sup>

This study looks at the reading practices of some Dickensians as a form of fandom and the afterlives of his characters as perpetuating that fandom. Literary fandoms have been studied by some New Media theorists; however there is often still a focus on genre literature like science fiction, or on modern literature such as works by Neil Gaiman and J.K. Rowling. While there have been innumerable works published in the last twenty years based on Jane Austen, Dickens, and the Brontës<sup>17</sup>, many fandom studies still distinguish these adaptations and re-imaginings as literary works rather than as fanfiction.

What does all this mean to Dickensian studies? In this thesis, I argue that, while anachronistic, the application of modern terms like fandom and fanfiction to Dickens’s work is illuminating. Even if fanfiction may be a term more usually associated with digital culture, the act of producing derivative and associative fiction without authorial consent has a much earlier historical starting point.

I will explore these ideas in addition to the general ideas of fandom, fan texts, and the differences and definitions of concepts like adaptation, appropriation, and plagiarism. Chapter Four will use Dickens’s own writings of *MHC*, *Mrs Gamp with the Strolling Players*, and the Dickens collaboration of *Mr. Nightingale’s Diary* as examples of Dickens himself not being satisfied with leaving his characters in their original novels. I will also look at a contemporary dramatization which expands on the popularity and/or story of minor characters from Dickens’s works as a way to

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<sup>16</sup> Paul Davis, ‘Retelling A Christmas Carol: Text and Culture-Text’, *The American Scholar*, 59 (1990) <[www.jstor.org/stable/41211762](http://www.jstor.org/stable/41211762)> [accessed 11 April 2016]

<sup>17</sup> These are works such as Jasper Fforde’s *The Eyre Affair*, Seth Grahame-Smith’s *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*, Terry Pratchett’s *Dodger*, Lynn Shepherd’s *Tom-All-Alone’s*, etc.

show that even non-protagonists from Dickens's novels were captivating to Victorian audiences.

But what happens when the appropriation or production of character is not in a text but in a thing? In my fifth chapter I will look at materialisations of Dickens's characters. But rather than taking memorabilia and talking about these things as things on the surface- and going into production cost, sales, etc- I am suggesting that if we take 'characters' themselves as the 'things' in thing theory, and interpret them as such, than the resultant effect imposed upon memorabilia by collectors can tell us something about how character is remembered, perpetuated, and re-interpreted. And thus, the form which the interpretation takes- be it doll, ceramic figurine, cigarette card, etc- can tell us something not only about how Dickens was received but how certain characters were understood and received.

Because of the surfeit of Dickens collectibles manufactured and hand-made from the 1830s to 2016, I will restrict my analysis to dolls and figurines of Dickens's characters. These prove sufficient to illustrate the dialogue between the aesthetic and canonical Dickens and popular culture Dickens.

In Chapter Five, I will take a closer look at a particularly interesting case of a Dickens character's archive being primarily paratextual. Dolly Varden, a heroine from *BR*, became so absorbed into popular culture that though her name lives on in numerous ways even today, the connection of that name to the original character is all but lost. Though her initial fascination with the public was through a painting by Frith, a painting loved and owned by Dickens, even Dickens could not have imagined her name being appropriated for the naming of a Diamond Mine, a trout, and two kinds of cake, for example.

After looking at how Dickens's characters have been reimagined in new texts and things, and how Dickens initially wrote and re-wrote them, Chapter Six will

bring my argument into the modern day with a look at the BBC television series *Dickensian* as an example of a current cultural trend toward how Dickens characters are read and appropriated into cultural memory. *Dickensian* is essentially a 'reboot' of the Dickensian character archive as it actively displays many of the arguments in my previous chapters; the show uses culture-texts of some of Dickens's characters, rewriting prequels for others, and reimagining new endings for others in order to create a universe that is 'inspired by' and not adapted from Dickens's works (as seen in Figure 93 from the credits of an episode).

*Dickensian* ultimately illustrates in a very practical way that Dickens's characters are an essential, if not primary, aspect of how Dickens himself is remembered and celebrated in cultural memory. After writing to numerous friends during his life about his thoughts on author memorials, and what he should wish for himself, Dickens wrote in his will:

I conjure my friends on no account to make me the subject of any monument, memorial, or testimonial whatever. I rest my claims to the remembrance of my country upon my published works, and to the remembrance of my friends upon their experience of me in addition thereto.<sup>18</sup>

Since his death there have been three statues erected to Charles Dickens (despite his wishes against such); the latest was placed in Portsmouth on the Bicentenary of his birth. But in the main, Dickens's wishes have been carried out. His works, in particular his characters, remain the most memorable aspect of 'Dickensiana'. Dickens's primary memorial is in his characters and nothing illustrates this better than *Dickensian*.

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<sup>18</sup> Charles Dickens, 'The Will of Charles Dickens', in *The Life of Charles Dickens*, ed. by John Forster (Oxford: Benediction Classics, 2011), pp. 825-29. p. 827.

## 2. Different ways of looking at Character in literature.

‘Meme’ is a word common to digital culture and social media, it often uses viral images and cultural references to make a joke. The word itself was coined in 1976 by Richard Dawkins in his book *The Selfish Gene*;

The new soup is the soup of human culture. We need a name for the new replicator, a noun which conveys the idea of a unit of cultural transmission, or a unit of imitation. ‘Mimeme’ comes from a suitable Greek root, but I want a monosyllable that sounds a bit like ‘gene’. I hope my classicist friends will forgive me if I abbreviate mimeme to meme... It should be pronounced to rhyme with ‘cream’. Examples of memes are tunes, ideas, catch-phrases, clothes fashions...<sup>19</sup>

By repeated imitation and repetition, a meme is created and culturally inherited much like an altered gene in genetics. Dawkins’s choice to associate cultural transmission with genetics proves that the importance of cultural artefacts to human history is also analogous to the persistence of the human race. For the first twenty years of its use, ‘meme’ was usually used in academic publications or journalism. However, the *Oxford English Dictionary* lists a second definition for the word, traced to 1998 for the use of meme within internet culture.<sup>20</sup> This second definition is the now the more commonly used, the humorous repetition of images and phrases. While the first definition traced a more scientific and more generalised idea of repetition, the second definition moved the term into popular culture. Thus, while some users on the internet may not be aware of the initial association of the word with genetics, most will be familiar with the cultural ideas of repetition and memory.

<sup>19</sup> Richard Dawkins, *The Selfish Gene* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976 [1999]). p.192.

<sup>20</sup> The OED online lists the publication in Jan 1998 in Sci & Tech Weekly of a transcript from a CNN TV programme talking about the first, arguably, viral internet video of a computer generated dancing baby. ‘Meme’, <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/239909?redirectedFrom=meme#eid> accessed online 17 Jan 2016. ‘meme, n.’ *OED Online*. Oxford University Press, December 2015. Web. 20 January 2016.

I would like to take the idea of the meme, the repetition and reuse, to literary characters, in particular Dickens's characters. Robert McParland writes that reading Dickens's novels, 'created a field of discourse, a common ground for communication. It was a source of shared symbols, images and phrases, a melodramatic meeting ground for social sentiment'.<sup>21</sup> While many writers including McParland often call Dickens's characters caricatures and thus imply their abnormality or exaggerated nature, McParland also notes the accessibility or universality of Dickens's characters as a key to their continued interest to the public:

People saw Dickens characters everywhere. Dickens provided a lens through which his readers took many verbal pictures of ordinary people. [...] In their [Americans'] memoirs, they are continually comparing people with Dickens's characters.<sup>22</sup>

Dickens's characters, like memes, quickly became repeated and reused until integrated into the culture of the time.

While I will come to argue that Dickens's characters are a special case when it comes to characters in cultural memory, first I would like to look at character in literature and how, even before the advent of the novel, characters were the 'meme' of literature. Characters, repeated through the literary forms of character, the portraiture, and the sketch become memetic recognisable figures. Whether playing the more generalised roles of the hero and villain or specific named characters such as Fagin and Oliver Twist, character becomes a basis for understanding through its associations in cultural memory. A person can be diagnosed with 'Peter Pan Syndrome', understanding the diagnosis not because of an in depth knowledge of psychology but because of a memetic understanding of who Peter Pan is. Likewise, the term 'Dickensian' can also be understood in its specific uses or as an umbrella

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<sup>21</sup> McParland, p.6.

<sup>22</sup> McParland, pp.25-26.

term for a certain type of character based on the repetitions of said characters in cultural memory.

In the next three sections, I will look at character in three forms- literary, visual, and theoretical- and how our understanding of character within these forms ultimately works together so that when we read, we read for character. When we read Dickens, we read for Dickens's characters.

### **2.1. Character in Literature**

If we reduce most narrative to roles, character can effectively be carried through an essentially small cast of almost pantomimic designations: the hero, the villain, the damsel, and the clown; Disney makes millions each year never straying from these types. In fact, by not developing much beyond stock characters, some writers have been criticised for poor character development or relying on clichéd backgrounds or motivations. Critically, some writers from E. M. Forster onward have made character writing and development a focus of theoretical writing. Writers analysing novels even before the advent of the critical theory discipline sought their own definition and understanding of the amorphous idea of 'character.'

Many critics<sup>23</sup> have tried to define character in relation to the function they represent in the narrative; that their existence is based solely on the role they play in the protagonists' journey. A character's 'function' can be reduced to their relation to the main characters and the plot surrounding those characters if we were to rely

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<sup>23</sup> Critics and theorists such as Vladimir Propp focus more on the roles characters play as archetypes. I will speak more about this approach to analysing character later in this chapter. Propp and other critics like him study Archetypal Literary Criticism which looks at characters solely through their archetypal roles. Other critics like these are: Northrop Frye, Joseph Campbell, and Carl Jung. This approach is different to my argument because I am looking at character as independent to plot or narrative whereas archetypes look at character in direct relation to their roles within the narrative or plot.

solely on understanding character via plot. This relation to plot is when the designation between major and minor characters develops. However, for every clearly determined 'role' there is a cast of characters, especially in Dickens, who not only surpass their corresponding hero in interest, dynamism, and memorable-ness, they also act outside of the central hero-plot.<sup>24</sup> By designating characters as either major or minor, there is a presupposition that either the plot or a singular character (the 'major' or 'lead' or 'hero') is of a primary or singular importance.<sup>25</sup> For this reason, it is important to look at 'character' as independent from, and non-reliant on, narrative or relationship to protagonist.

In one of its definitions, a character is a single letter.<sup>26</sup> Inherent in this simplicity is the understanding that character is also a signifier. A 'character' can be either an alphabetic letter or an ideograph (i.e. a Chinese 'character' being a graphic representation of an idea which then stands for an element of construction of a larger idea).<sup>27</sup> Previous to its literary connotation, 'character' came to represent more the act of writing itself, the act of inscribing or denominating. The development from this idea of character to its modern, more literary definition is concurrent with the development of the literary form of 'character.' Although not generally recognized thus, Charles Dickens began his career writing in the style of character with *SBB*. To understand how the form of the Victorian 'sketch' is a legacy of character, I shall first look at the background of 'character'.

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<sup>24</sup> The concept of 'memorable-ness' is itself a fairly abstract term. Ultimately judging how 'memorable' a character is can be understood by looking at a number of aspects of character representation and reproduction, post-text. I will look into these ideas further in Chapter Four and Chapter Five where I look at how characters in Dickens continue have a new existence outside of the original source text and authorial intent.

<sup>25</sup> For example, works such as Alex Woloch's *The One Versus the Many*, and David Galef's *The Supporting Cast*. I will look at these critics in more depth later.

<sup>26</sup> The seventh definition of 'character' in the *Oxford English Dictionary* is 'a printed or written letter or symbol'. 'Character.' "Character", in *Oxford English Dictionary*, ed. by Catherine Soanes, Sara Hawker and Julia Elliott, 2nd edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 119.

<sup>27</sup> 'Ideograph: A written symbol. A picture of the thing itself or a representation of the idea. The Chinese and Japanese languages are ideographic.' Source: 'Ideograph', in *The Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory*, ed. by JA Cuddon, 4th edn (London: Penguin, 1998), p. 411.

### 2.1.1. Tracing the Genre ‘Charactery’

In the second century B.C., a Greek author by the name Theophrastus wrote a book called *Characters*.<sup>28</sup> With section headings like ‘The Fabricator of News’, ‘The Busybody’, ‘The Filthy’, and ‘The Oligarch’, Theophrastus examines certain characters of society, mainly negative, with generalised comments and instructional commentary. This volume in its many forms, translations, and editions has influenced writers of fiction and nonfiction, prose and poetry. It is arguably the oldest form of character study. Later dubbed the literary practice of ‘charactery’, the form gained a strong following in the sixteenth and seventeenth century. Critics have traced early writers of a similar form in Anglo-Saxon gnomic literature, the Old Testament, Homer, and Chaucer, as well as a man from Lesbos (b. bc 371, d. bc 287).<sup>29</sup> These early forms are presumed to have no connection to Theophrastus due to the unavailability of the Greek text but are nevertheless similar in intent. Itself a self-reflexive practice, charactery was at once a form of entertainment and also a commentary on contemporary life. Thus, its entertainment value saw its wide dissemination while its social and critical element fostered its longevity.

The popularity of Theophrastus as a particular influence begins for certain in the sixteenth century with an initial publication of 15 ‘Characters’ in 1517, ‘with new editions-at least one each decade- thereafter’.<sup>30</sup> Donald Beecher quotes the Victorian editor Richard Jebb in theorising that the great popularity of Theophrastus began in earnest in the 1592 edition and that, ‘the 1592 Casaubon edition of the *Characters*

<sup>28</sup> ‘Character and Characterization’, in *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, ed. by MH Abrams, 7th edn (Boston: Heinle & Heinle, 1999), pp. 32-34.

<sup>29</sup> Donald Beecher, ‘Introduction’, in *Characters, Together with Poems, News, Edicts, and Paradoxes based on the Eleventh Edition of A Wife Now the Widow of Sir Thomas Overbury*, ed. by Donald Beecher (Ottawa: Dovehouse Editions, 2003), pp. 11-108. p. 39.

<sup>30</sup> Beecher, p.33.



was the veritable “parent” to all character-writing proper in England’.<sup>31</sup> Previous to this supposed influential edition, early forms of character study were mainly moral and/or religious in style and intent. Revivals of Theophrastus in the humanist movement as well as developments in the form independent from the Greek writer<sup>32</sup> in the seventeenth century saw political and social developments to character studies. Richard Jebb wrote in 1870, noting the historical importance of looking back at ‘characters’ illustrative of a time; ‘At a time when the desire to see ancient life more vividly on every side from which it can illustrate our own is perhaps the strongest,’ a seemingly simple, witty paragraph or two illustrating a ‘type’ of person can tell much historically about a society.<sup>33</sup> It is for this reason that various forms of character study have continued socially and academically even after the form has been engulfed and eclipsed by other literary genres.

Largely seen as the first work to launch the character genre into English literature, Joseph Hall’s *Heaven upon Earth and Characters of Vertues and Vices* was published in 1606. As Rudolf Kirk writes in his introduction to an edition of Hall’s work, ‘It was new in the sense that no Englishman before him had written a book devoted entirely to character sketched in the manner of Theophrastus.’<sup>34</sup> Soon after, another primary text in character, and very popular in its time and still considered a seminal work, are the collected characters by Sir Thomas Overbury. While the collection of characters, poems, and ‘news’ pieces were published in various editions under the name of Sir Thomas Overbury, they were published

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<sup>31</sup> Beecher, p.32.

<sup>32</sup> Influences and imitations of Theophrastus are tenuously traced. Theories evolve by critics as to which writers were influenced by Theophrastus by the availability of the Greek text and translations of it as well as the educational background of the humanist writer. Theophrastus’s direct influence is still rather contentious but regardless, his work is still held by many to be the first emergence of the form later dubbed as character.

<sup>33</sup> RC Jebb, *The Characters of Theophrastus: An English Translation from a Revised Text with Introduction and Notes 1870*, ed. by JE Sandys (London: Macmillan, 1909). p.V.

<sup>34</sup> Joseph Hall, *Heaven Upon Earth and Characters of Vertues and Vices*, ed. by Rudolf Kirk (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1948). p.1.

posthumously and have since been found to be the a collected work of numerous authors including Overbury. Donald Beecher, in his annotated text of Overbury's *Characters*, estimates the form of the published work can be traced to the publisher Lisle, gathering a collection of both Overbury's work and other writers' works in the form of Overbury. First published in 1614, Overbury's *Characters* became such a hit that Lisle published numerous editions, each time adding new character pieces, supposedly also written by the deceased Overbury.<sup>35</sup> To whomever the character sketches can be traced, the anthropologic and literary reach of the seventeenth-century piece is arguably more important. Humanist readers began to look at Theophrastus's work as 'social data' in the sixteenth century, and thus the work of the Overburians (as the numerous contributors to Overbury's *Characters* have been dubbed) set a precedent as being more of a 'social digest' than a moral guidebook directed toward descriptions of vice and virtue like the so titled work by Hall.<sup>36</sup>

The genre of the character, increasingly popular in the seventeenth century, became one of political and social satire as well as social observation.<sup>37</sup> While one theorist, T. W. Baldwin stated that the form of character 'marked the beginning of the decline of the Renaissance' due to its seeming typologizing being a 'retrograde step and hence symptomatic of decline', Beecher states that it could be seen as a positive step as a 'retreat from allegory toward pre-novelistic factification [sic]'.<sup>38</sup> Whilst acknowledging the limitations of the size and form of the genre, most agree that the social and linguistic knowledge gained from character more than make up for its shortcomings. Even to Victorian critic Jebb, the language alone could provide invaluable insight into the social attitude of when the characters were written:

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<sup>35</sup> Beecher, p.12.

<sup>36</sup> Beecher, p.12.

<sup>37</sup> While anthropology did not exist at this time, the beginnings of what was to become the discipline were evident in the social research of the seventeenth century.

<sup>38</sup> Beecher, p.16.

every civilised people has another [language] which necessarily dies with it, the language of society. The general sense of a word survives in books, and it is sometimes possible by comparison of passages to discriminate shades of meaning; but it is seldom or never possible to be sure that we have seized the precise notions which the word conveyed long ago.<sup>39</sup>

Thus, by studying the humour and social commentary inherent in character, the historical anthropologist and even the literary theorist can catch a glimpse into the society of a bygone time. For Jebb, and other Victorians fascinated with the ancient world and Classics, seeing Athenian society through Theophrastus's eyes was more valuable than looking at any museum artefact or reading accounts of historical events. Character, through its social connection, is able to place the reader in the position of a member of a crowd amongst the 'Drunkards', 'Good Women', and 'Honourable Men' of a time. Thus, not secondary to the reader at all, the character was a living historic artefact.

Where character was previously moralistic, it was meant to be read as an abstract in that the correlation of character to person was a guide. Often, the characters being described were grotesque, negative typifications of everyday 'sinners.' The idea was that with a guide of how not to be, one could fashion oneself in a better image. However, especially with the popularity of Overbury's *Characters*, character began to be written as observations rather than solely creations. As Beecher quite aptly writes, 'In reading the city of London, the Overburians discovered a gallery of idiosyncratic social types, whereas their predecessors had discovered a theatre of the venial and deadly sins' and 'As these writers pass from type to type, they build up a *dramatis personae* of the City'.<sup>40</sup> Where Baldwin saw the death of the Renaissance, Cristina Malcolmson sees a transition 'between feudalism and individualism when the quiddities of personhood were classified

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<sup>39</sup> Jebb, p.1.

<sup>40</sup> Beecher, p.35 and p.36.

according to the socially constructed desires that motivated them'.<sup>41</sup> After the pre-seventeenth-century moral 'characters' writers extended their observations to national 'types' and even non-humans. For example, the 'character' of the 'Scotsman' and 'Welshman' became popular and J. W. Smeed notes, 'Most character books from Overbury onwards included one or more "characters" of places [...] One even finds occasional 'characters' of animals.'<sup>42</sup> After Overbury's collection popularized the social 'type', writers began to experiment with political 'characters' and more and more everyday professional 'characters.' 'Characters' even began to expand out of the city; where previously written for educated and wealthy people on 'types' in the city or otherwise written as moral 'types' for sermons, the seventeenth century saw 'character' in other places. Saltonstall wrote about rural types in 1631. Lupton published in the same year a book of character called *London and the Country*, placing London 'characters' next to rural 'characters' intentionally for the first time.<sup>43</sup>

Thus, wit and humour began to be more important than instruction. Ralph Johnson writes in 1665, of the 'rules' of writing a 'character', 'A character is a witty and facetious description,' and 'striving for wit and pleasantness, together with tart nipping jerks about their vices or miscarriages'.<sup>44</sup> The emphasis on wit and humour had come a long way from the stern sermon-like 'characters' of the pre-humanists. However, even in acknowledging the different intentions behind the characters, whether humour or instruction, this very intention again emphasises the importance of the character as an artefact of cultural history. Much like the modern meme, these pieces of character used language, metaphor, and humour to illustrate the ideas of the contemporary culture.

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<sup>41</sup> Beecher, p.11.

<sup>42</sup> JW Smeed, *The Theophrastan 'Character': The History of a Literary Genre* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985). p.38.

<sup>43</sup> Smeed, p.38.

<sup>44</sup> Smeed, pp.36-37.

It is perhaps important to mention that labelling character as a literary form may seem to include an understanding of literary character from our modern critical background, in fact the development of the form in its latter forms worked in tandem with the development of new literary forms such as the novel and its immediate predecessors. Listed at the end of the short character sketches in Overbury's anthology is a short piece 'What a Character Is.' Overbury, or whoever the writer of this section was, acknowledges the Greek roots of the word and the 'schoolmaster language' of this definition.<sup>45</sup> However, the short section ends with the definition most useful for the preceding sketches. This definition reads:

To square out a character by our English level, it is a picture, real or personal, quaintly drawn in various colours, all of them heightened by one shadowing. It is a quick and soft touch of many strings all shutting up in one musical close. It is wit's descant on any plain song.<sup>46</sup>

Beecher himself seems to take this idea in his 'definition' of character in the introduction, 'a discrete essay in prose about a fictive person whose presiding 'virtue' or 'vice' is manifest in a number of tell-tale traits and gestures.'<sup>47</sup> Overbury's 'one shadowing' becomes Beecher's 'presiding virtue or vice' and the 'musical close' is the 'essay.' However, within Beecher's simplified and non-metaphorical terms, these characters seem to lend themselves to being defined as caricatures.

Indeed, one criticism inherent in all forms of character, from its allegorical to anthologic form, is that in the act of 'characterizing', there is also, to whatever extent, a reduction of characteristics to one overriding 'type' or that the 'character' is a 'caricature.' However, while acknowledging the need to 'combine generality with

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<sup>45</sup> Sir Thomas Overbury, *Characters, Together with Poems, News, Edicts, and Paradoxes based on the Eleventh Edition of A Wife Now the Widow of Sir Thomas Overbury*, ed. by Donald Beecher (Ottawa: Dovehouse Editions, 2003). p.293.

<sup>46</sup> Overbury, p.293.

<sup>47</sup> Beecher, p.34.

individuality'<sup>48</sup>, historians of character very rarely associate the genre with the term 'caricature' or acknowledge this reduction. This arguable 'blind-spot' is because 'caricature' was not used until the mid-eighteenth century. Previously, its Italian form, *caricatura*, was only adopted in the late 1600s and only commonly used in the seventeenth century.<sup>49</sup> In fact, for a character to be a character in its seventeenth-century definition, it needed to adhere to a type; so much so that before the eighteenth century, 'characters' were never given personal names and were instead only named by their type. Character as a form then, at its height, was the study of what would come to be defined as caricature without the definition actually being coined; thus, in its 'pure' form, character *was* caricature without the negative connotations inherent in the modern literary use of the word.

The form of character, whether thus named or no (as the name itself came to be replaced with others such as the 'sketch'), can be identified with hundreds of pieces of work since Theophrastus. Beecher notes more than 200 collections before the end of the seventeenth century alone. Smeed estimates over four figures.<sup>50</sup> In the next century, Samuel Butler was most notable for writing almost 200 characters, the largest collection to date, published in 1759.<sup>51</sup> However Beecher notes the change in the eighteenth-century character from the previous century was, 'pointing to the novelistic where the one is but himself.'<sup>52</sup> This is because, as Beecher elaborates:

the final impression is not so much of a sociological mapping as of a gallery of eccentrics. Concerning many of the 'types' he proposes, one can imagine but one living example, and sometimes none at all; many are simply greater than life.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Jebb, p.23.

<sup>49</sup> "Caricature", in *Oxford English Dictionary Online* <<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/27971?rskey=g5sBoC&result=1#eid9955993>> [accessed 24 May 2016]

<sup>50</sup> Jebb, p.36.

<sup>51</sup> Samuel Butler, *Characters and Passages from Note-books*, ed. by AR Weller (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1908).

<sup>52</sup> Beecher, p.93.

<sup>53</sup> Beecher, p.93.

With the suggestion of the emergence of the novel, Beecher stops his history of character. While his proposal that character was becoming lost in the invention of the novel seems to point to a loss of the form, in truth, character was far from lost in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Instead of being understood as a predecessor to the novel or a form subsumed by the novel, character instead was a foundation for the novel and, rather than disappearing into the novel, in fact helped build up the novel as an important cultural item.

In the seventeenth century, in addition to the flourishing of character in English, French literature, mainly aristocratic literature, was experiencing a boom in 'portrait' literature. Like 'character', 'portraits' were brief descriptions of a person, fairly exaggerated and witty. However, these 'portraits' were always intended to identify with an actual person, hence their being a genre singular to the elite classes. In 1688, La Bruyère published *Les Caractères de Thèophraste traduits de grec avec les Caractères ou les Mœurs de ce Siècle*<sup>54</sup>. Considered the next important publication, La Bruyère's work combined the English genre of Character with the French 'portraits' to both illustrate types and 'characters' of real people. La Bruyère's work is considered an important change in character because it signals the movement from anonymous types to characters (in the modern sense of the term). This movement in the genre was one step closer to the emergence of the novelised character as the dominant literary form.

Like all art forms, character could not continue unchanged amidst a changing literary world. Many character historians either leave their history at the beginning of the eighteenth century entirely or lament the loss of character to the growing popularity of the novel. Smeed theorises that eighteenth-century and nineteenth-century writers use character initially to plan their novels or characters and leave

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<sup>54</sup> Smeed, p.64.

the genre in development of both. Other critics restrict their study up to a certain year, as in Benjamin Boyce's *The Theophrastan Character in England to 1642*.<sup>55</sup> In fact, from the eighteenth to the nineteenth century, charactery enjoyed a rich life within the popularity of the periodical. From the *Tatler* in 1709 and the *Spectator* in 1711, to Victorian periodicals the following century, British publishing saw numerous examples that charactery was alive and well, even if not being published in bound volumes of anthologies like Overbury and Hall.<sup>56</sup> Among many, famous essayists Johnson, Hazlitt, and Lamb all explored the genre in periodical publishing. Johnson even published in the final issue of the *Rambler* in 1752, that he had a 'character' goal for the journal; that he, 'aimed at truth to life and has avoided caricature, because violent exaggeration would make it impossible for the reader to recognize a living type.'<sup>57</sup>

Charactery in periodicals continued into the nineteenth century and the genre also enjoyed a resurgence of bound anthologies of popular essays such as Catherine Gore's *Sketches of English Character* (1846), Thackeray's *Book of Snobs* (1846-7), Mayhew's *London Labour and the London Poor* (1851), and the anonymous *London Characters and the Humorous Side of Life* (1871). Gore's two-volume collection of 'sketches' is a clear indication that the genre of charactery was alive and well in the nineteenth century, it was simply living under another name, the sketch. First published in 1846, a decade after Dickens's *SBB*, Gore states in the introduction to her first volume that originality is lacking in the people of British society and thus, her volume was written from the types that abound:

They could draw his portrait, or make a model of him, without ever having set eyes upon his face. Such people are made to pattern; and the type of each is as

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<sup>55</sup> Smeed, p.78.

<sup>56</sup> Smeed, p.114.

<sup>57</sup> Smeed, p.75.



familiar to every mother's son of us, as though specifically sold at a turner's, like a bat and ball.<sup>58</sup>

Thus, Gore unknowingly acknowledges her reasoning behind her two volume collection of characters as adding to the literary tradition of charactery.

Many Victorian miscellanies and journals like *Punch* also published illustrations and verse pieces on 'characters', especially involving London. Charactery was far from disappearing from literary circles. While the 'characters' themselves may not be called Theophrastan in their direct form, the genre's influence and style is nonetheless evident. Smeed notes the popularity of the 'character' book by highlighting Thackeray's and Dickens's works as well as the collections *Sketches of Young Ladies* by Edward Caswall; however, he looks at these works as 'apprenticeships' for the novelists and Mayhew's work as too serious to be classified truly as charactery. Smeed is too strict in his classification. If Dickens had not gone on to become a popular novelist, would his sketches still be seen as an apprenticeship? In fact, Dickens's huge cast of characters beyond the main hero and villain and his interest in subplots with comic or otherwise minor characters proves that while Dickens did move from a more obvious form of charactery to the novel, his interest was always on the character beyond the restrictive function of the novel plot. In other words,

when a novelist like Dickens gives his characters room in which to display themselves; he does so by partly freeing them from formal controls, so they no longer serve plot much. [...] Indeed, these comic characters are often very little controlled by their plot function; they tend to exist as ends in themselves.<sup>59</sup>

Dickens did build plot up around his practice of writing sketches but his focus was always on the character itself.

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<sup>58</sup> Catherine Gore, *Sketches of English Character 1846* (Stroud: Nonsuch, 2005), I. p.14.

<sup>59</sup> Robert Higbie, *Character & Structure in the English Novel* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1984). pp. 88 and 121-122.

While undoubtedly the nineteenth-century version of the ‘character’ had come a long way from the Greek Theophrastan model or even the humanist revival of Theophrastus, nineteenth-century characterity should be noted for its contributions to the genre. Smeed finds characterity only in brief introductions to characters in novels or in certain works like George Eliot’s *Impressions of Theophrastus Such* (perhaps he was a bit pre-inclined to approve of the work because Eliot mentions Theophrastus in the title). He claims characterity:

will often be a minor figure who will play a brief part and then disappear from view, but can be a more important character, provided that he is not so complex or unpredictable as to deviate radically from the pattern of behaviour implied by the initial description.<sup>60</sup>

Similarly, Smeed claims a main character can be at first described with a ‘character’ if only to prove a point or then to later refute that ‘character’ with character growth. What Smeed seems to be saying is that the nineteenth-century ‘character’ can be replaced with the ‘caricature;’ however, Smeed does not use this term. Otherwise, Smeed also seems to be implying that characterity can only be consistently applied to the minor characters. However, we have already seen that this is not true since the recognisable ‘type’ of the hero, villain, etc are undoubtedly consistent types but are still the main characters of most stories. For example, *Oliver Twist* is very often used in cultural references as a symbol of the orphan, the impoverished public, the abandoned child, etc but is not only the main character of the novel but also its namesake.

In a short section on Dickens, Smeed claims Dickens’s characters cannot be closely connected with characterity because they are more ‘eccentric’, ‘grotesque’, and ‘colloquial “characters”’ than Theophrastan ‘characters.’ Smeed shys away from the term caricature with Dickens because Smeed has already associated characterity with

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<sup>60</sup> Smeed, p.228.

‘type’ and ‘type’ is often synonymous with caricature and Smeed is trying to refute Dickens’s close connection to character. There also sits, rather uncomfortably, the undefined term ‘colloquial “character”’. While Smeed delves into the nineteenth century where most Theophrastan critics stay in the seventeenth or previous centuries, his definitions remain either too rigid or too abstract. He appears to address the nineteenth century only to refute its connection to character.

By looking at character in its most basic form, as a literary description of recognisable types, next to Dickensian types- the misery Ebenezer Scrooge, the jilted gothic bride Miss Havisham, the poor orphaned Oliver Twist- it is clear to most readers that while these characters sit within the literary form of the novel, they are also descriptive types who transcend their novels and repeat into cultural memory. Before he wrote these now iconic characters, Dickens began his writing career by exploring character.

### **2.1.2. *Sketches by Boz* as a form of Character**

Dickens’s *SBB* and *Sketches of Young Gentlemen and Young Couples* retain familiarity with character in the format and in the nature of their observational narration. While previously most ‘characters’ were recognized to be comprised of brief descriptions of a page or less, most of Dickens’s sketches are short narrations. They are much more imaginative in placing the ‘character’ within a setting or in their recognition of the setting as the ‘character’ (as in the section entitled *Scenes*). Smeed postulates that Dickens touches on character only for ‘practice’ for his later novels. This might be true in certain sketches which read more like short stories, as in the section entitled ‘Tales’. As this section is also the last section, the idea that Dickens is progressing to narrative is also supported by the chronology of the collection.

However, a similar progression from brief character description to full narrative can also be found in the first section ‘Seven Sketches from Our Parish,’ which begins by describing anonymous members of the parish and ends by not only naming and personalising said characters but relating them to each other. However, as I will highlight later, modern collections of *SBB* do not follow the original publication chronology of the individual sketches. Additionally, Dickens’s sketches were first published as individual pieces in periodicals and only after they began to gain popularity were published in volumes. Thus, any ‘progression’ of style and form within the collection *SBB* should not naturally be assumed a single directional progression of the genre into the beginnings of the novel.

Dickens takes character along with the French genre of portrait and creates characters that are at one point recognizable as types and also eccentric enough to be remembered in their own right. This way of writing was to follow Dickens his entire career and even to come to signify Dickensian narration. It is therefore not in any progression or development of writing that character is lost but rather character is Dickens’s primary writing style. Even his later novels, which are generally recognised as being more serious and less inclined to caricature than his earlier pieces, contain characters vividly eccentric and yet wholly individual and real such as Jenny Wren and Durdles.

Dickens’s *SBB* was instantly popular because his characters, even in the short sketches, were so lifelike as to be instantly recognizable to his readers. Each gin shop customer and street gentleman had enough description to be a real person but enough generality to be a type. In fact, Dickens’s often over simplification and generalizing reads as a purposeful representation of type.

In his *Sketches*, Dickens explores the beginning of a ‘new’ way of writing character, by combining the form common in the seventeenth and eighteenth

centuries with fictional narrative. The first section of Dickens's sketches, 'Seven Sketches from Our Parish' is initially recognizable as traditional charactery.<sup>61</sup> While they have too much narration to be considered truly Theophrastan, there are many other characteristics of charactery that Dickens does follow. Ralph Johnson's 'rules' of charactery in 1665 state that:

Chose a subject, viz. Such a sort of men as will admit a variety of observation, such be drunkards [etc.][...] Express their natures, qualities, conditions, practices, tools, desires, aims or ends, by witty Allegories or Allusions to things or terms in nature or art, of like nature and resemblance, still striving for wit and pleasantness, together with tart ripping jerks about their lives or miscarriages [...] Conclude with some witty and neat passage, leaving them to the effect of their follies or studies.<sup>62</sup>

Initially, Dickens does not give his 'Parish' characters names. While the narrator's use of 'I' places the setting particular to the view of a certain individual rather than the world in general, it often switches to 'We' and 'Our' acknowledging the inclusion of the reader into the narrator's particular world. The first sketch begins vaguely enough to be Theophrastan; the narrator mentions 'the' parish beadle as if setting the character as 'all' parish beadles. However, after setting up what could be the 'character' in its brevity of two descriptive paragraphs, Dickens uses his first 'our'. But Dickens does not depart from charactery simply by using a personal pronoun; instead, Dickens continues a general description, even after introducing names.

While Dickens's use of names cannot be said to be truly 'portraiture', since his characters are still fictitious (while possibly based on actual individuals)<sup>63</sup> and his

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<sup>61</sup> This is the first section as printed in modern editions of the collected 'SBB' as seen in the Nonesuch edition quoted from in this paper. For full original publication dates and journal titles as well as original sketch titles, see *Dickens's Uncollected Magazine and Newspaper Sketches as Originally Composed and Published 1833-1836*, ed. by Robert C. Hanna (New York: AMS Press Inc, 2012).

<sup>62</sup> Smeed, p.36.

<sup>63</sup> There is a wide range of scholarship dedicated to finding and analysing the 'originals' of Dickens's characters. Not only has this research been fascinating to scholars but while Dickens was still alive, great controversies began when certain characters were aligned to certain real people; Dickens even almost lost a friendship over his connection of Leigh Hunt to Skimpole. Even in the collection *Recollections and Memories of Dickens*, his old school-fellows swear by certain characters and incidences having their originals in their time at school with Dickens.

sketches are of general life and not exclusively upper class, in Dickens the specificity in French 'portraits' elaborates on the vagueness of English character. The second sketch leaves the generality of traditional character entirely. The sketch, 'The Curate, The Old Lady, The Half-Pay Captain' uses narration and plot to set up mini 'stories' in which the 'character' of character becomes the character of fiction (and what was to become novels). However, the presence of character still affects the image of the characters. For example, while the 'Curate' is described visually to create a specific image rather than a general 'Curate' and his story progresses through the sketch with a definite beginning, middle, and end (his arrival, his popularity, and his rival's supremacy), the reader is aware that this tale, while a specific one, could nonetheless be repeated in similar ways in parishes around the country. Dickens still remembers to include general statements to bring the reader back to thinking of these sketches as generality, with statements like 'there was no denying that- that- in short, the curate wasn't a novelty' and 'The inconstancy of public opinion is proverbial'.<sup>64</sup> Dickens continues thus in 'The Old Lady', describing her parlour precisely while saying 'Thus [...] passes the old lady's life. It has rolled on in the same unvarying and benevolent course for many years now'.<sup>65</sup> Likewise, the lack of proper names gives the subjects generality while the specificity of place and action restricts this generality.

The first seven sketches proceed in increasing levels of specificity. The sketch 'The Four Sisters' introduces the idea of a central character with a name, albeit not in the title; however Dickens still remains vague by giving all four central characters the same name, Miss Willis. He even writes at the beginning of the sketch, 'As we cannot [...] extend the number of our parochial sketches beyond six, it will be better perhaps,

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<sup>64</sup> Charles Dickens, *Sketches By Boz 1836* (Stroud: Nonsuch, 2007). p.19.

<sup>65</sup> *SBB*, p.21.

to select the most peculiar, and to introduce them at once'.<sup>66</sup> While Dickens is highlighting this peculiarity, he states quickly that the four sisters are almost as one; 'They seemed to have no separate existence.'<sup>67</sup> In fact, while writing the very odd circumstance of four sisters seemingly courting the same man, Dickens is highlighting the simultaneous universality between the four sisters. While they are given an individual name that name is the same for all four; while their situation is peculiar from an outsider looking in, their similarities also negate that uniqueness.

Dickens develops the sketches further toward novel-style in the fifth sketch with the introduction of a second narrator. In 'Mr Bung's Narrative' within the sketch 'The Broker's Man', Dickens has a specific character write a personal 'character.' That is, Mr. Bung writes a personal 'character' on the nature of being a broker. Even though Mr. Bung is a specific entity, he acknowledges the role that he plays is also general; 'The thing was no worse because I did it, instead of somebody else.'<sup>68</sup> It is clear that, in having his developed character write a 'character', Dickens has not lost sight of the genre of character and has instead begun to develop it to be compatible with but not supplanted by narration.

Within his sketches, Dickens begins a form of narration which will follow him throughout his career and for which he will often be criticized, that of breaking the wall between narration and reader and having the narrator address the reader independent of the story.<sup>69</sup> While in the context of his novels, addressing the reader directly can break up the flow of narration and disrupt the world of the narrative. Dickens is really harkening back to the Theophrastan model of character where the writer is describing figures as if he is directly addressing the reader. Using this

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<sup>66</sup> *SBB*, p.23.

<sup>67</sup> *SBB*, p.24.

<sup>68</sup> *SBB*, p.37.

<sup>69</sup> The image this practice brings up is similar to 'breaking the fourth wall' in theatre and film where a character in the story addresses the viewer directly; thus the character inherently addresses the nature of fiction and narration.

narration technique allows Dickens to relate his narration to more general practices in the 'real world' (or the world of the reader). The only reason Dickens's use of this mode of speech is out of place is because his use of narration seems incongruous with direct address.

Later in the parish sketches, Dickens goes into a theory of the physiognomy of door-knockers. Physiognomy was also connected to Theophrastus in the nineteenth century. An edition of Theophrastus's *Characters* was published in 1836 alongside a collection of physiognomic sketches. The connection between the genre of character and physiognomy to the Victorian mind was direct. Dickens's sketch of the parish neighbours begins with a discussion on the direct correlation between a man's 'character' and his door-knocker. Dickens even uses general terms of character description to draw up these connections. A certain kind of lion knocker is, 'a great favourite with the selfish and brutal' and an Egyptian knocker is for 'your government-office people.'<sup>70</sup> Dickens's use of physiognomy is a tool which allows the reader to immediately recognise a physical appearance with a verbal description since physiognomy itself was concerned with recognisable types. Readers are able to mentally visualise the door-knocker and its owner by the association with types. Even generations later, critics are still praising Dickens for the visual imagery in his writing. Dickens goes on to describe a couple of specific characters who move into a room to let and thus we lose the direct Theophrastan 'characters' of the door knockers. Dickens's physiognomy of door-knockers interestingly relates the thingness of caricature to actual things, thus showing how characters can be used, like things, for certain purposes.

These sketches were the first pieces of fiction Dickens had written and published. In the next collection, Dickens delved even deeper into narration with his

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<sup>70</sup> *SBB*, pp.51 and 52.



‘Scenes’; however, he still maintained a degree of homage to character, very often in describing the ‘character’ of a place rather than a person. By describing the scenes surrounding a certain place, and the action which occurs in and around said place, Dickens is able to develop the ‘character’ of that place even over a number of different sketches connecting the same place. The primary ‘character’ in the ‘scenes’ section is London. Often sourced for inspiration, London was the capital of the British Empire, and the largest city (by population and area) in the world.<sup>71</sup> As seen in the title of Mayhew’s sociological study, *London Labour and the London Poor*, as well as the more direct *London Characters*, London was an inexhaustible source from which to create, imitate, or depict people in writing. However, for Dickens, London was a solid character itself.

While some of the sketches within the ‘Scenes’ collection have titles not specific to London as in ‘The Streets’, ‘Shops and Their Tenants’, and ‘The First of May’, they are, in the actual sketch, specific to London. While speaking of streets, Dickens writes a map of London based on the activities of people in the morning and night. Dickens follows:

Numbers of men and women (principally the latter), carrying upon their heads heavy baskets of fruit, toil down the dark side of Piccadilly, on their way to Covent-garden, and, following each other in rapid succession, form a long straggling line from thence to the turn of the road at Knightsbridge.<sup>72</sup>

After following the early morning ware-sellers, Dickens writes about the Clerks heading to work in, ‘Somers and Camden towns, Islington, and Pentonville [...] towards Chancery Lane and the Inns of Court.’<sup>73</sup> The city populace progressively filling the streets might remind the film fan of the 1968 musical *Oliver!* when the Artful Dodger introduces Oliver to London with the rousing number ‘Consider

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<sup>71</sup> Francis Sheppard, *London: A History* (Oxford: Oxford University Publishing, 2006 [1998]). p.2.

<sup>72</sup> *SBB*, p.61.

<sup>73</sup> *SBB*, p.64.

yourself' seen in Figure 8. Dickens's early morning city inhabitants jostle about the streets until noon, where Dickens leaves the streets until the next sketch, 'The Streets-Night.' Dickens highlights the characteristics of London at night by the contrast to the bustle of the morning:

when the heavy lazy mist, which hangs over every object, makes the gas-lamps look brighter, and the brilliantly-lighted shops more splendid, from the contrast they present to the darkness around.<sup>74</sup>

In 'The First of May', Dickens brings the centuries old pagan celebration of May-Day from the country into the heart of the city by transforming the iconic May Pole into the statues and columns of the city. Dickens writes as 'we', walking about the city and bemoaning the loss of the pastoral in the urban as the inhabitants of the city head into parlours instead of May fields. But again, in the contrast Dickens gives a very real character of the city.



**Figure 8: 'Consider Yourself' screen capture from *Oliver!*, dir. Carol Reed (1968). Image©<http://lecinemadreams.blogspot.co.uk/2014/04/oliver-1968.html>.**

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<sup>74</sup> *SBB*, p.65.

The specificity of the sketches ‘Seven Dials’, ‘Meditations in Monmouth Street’, and ‘Doctors Commons’ only increase Dickens’s focus on flushing out the character of the city. Besides the specificity of the location, in these three sketches, Dickens meditates on the lives in London and the progression of life in London. Reminding his readers that London is not a static character and indeed even in the stasis of a written sketch, lives can be lived and moved; this idea is reflecting the tangibility and timelessness of character and the sketch. Dickens paints the ‘still life of the subject’ in the Seven Dials, listing men, women, and children next to the dogs, rotting fruit and ‘reeking pipes’ in the same picture.<sup>75</sup> Later, in the Monmouth sketch, Dickens writes about the second-hand clothes shops and the lives lived in the wearing, re-wearing, and re-selling of clothes. In the most touching and emotive part of the sketch, Dickens writes about personifying the clothes hanging in the shop to the presumed lives previously owning the clothes, ‘There was the man’s whole life written as legibly on those clothes, as if we had his autobiography engrossed on parchment before us.’<sup>76</sup> Dickens uses the legal bureaucracy of Doctors Commons to talk about momentous times in people’s lives such as Marriage, Divorce, and Death with the work on marriage licenses, divorce certificates, and wills.

By the end of the section, instead of a collection of scenes, what Dickens gives his reader is a ‘character’ of London, spaced out through ‘chapters’ on specific characteristics. One of the largest sections of the book, ‘Scenes’ allows the reader to walk the streets of London alongside Dickens and experience the city at street level, while appreciating the over-arching mapping of the single entity of the city. At the same time, Dickens allows time for the reader to experience lives in the city as an important characteristic of the character of the city. While strict followers of

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<sup>75</sup> *SBB*, p.82.

<sup>76</sup> *SBB*, p.86.

Theophrastus and Overbury might dismiss Dickens's character of the city in a glance, if we use character as a basis for understanding how character is written and appreciated in literature, Dickens's writing of London as a character is, and has been, one of the most memorable and recognisable in literature.

In the next section, entitled 'Characters', Dickens again demonstrates a principle in his writing that will continue on in his career- that of placing the character as the foremost element in the narrative. In this section, we see Dickens play with the traditional Theophrastan model as in the general sketches 'Thoughts on People' and 'Shabby-Genteel People'. Dickens also delves into short story narration which will continue into the final section, 'Tales', whilst still foregrounding the character. As in the opening sketches on the parish, Dickens gives the characters names but their personalities remain general enough to be 'characters.' Likewise, his interspersing narrative with more general sketches like the aforementioned 'Shabby Genteel People' reminds his readers that there is still an element of general type to all the characters of which he is writing. In this sketch, Dickens talks about a specific type of person as the 'Shabby-Genteel' person as a conglomerate of two or more common 'types', 'Now, shabby people, God knows, may be found anywhere, and genteel people are not articles of greater scarcity out of London than in it; but this compound of the two- this shabby-gentility- is as purely local as the statue at Charing-cross'.<sup>77</sup> Clearly here, Dickens is asserting the legitimacy of this 'type' or character as worthy of special note. However, this is balanced by his assertion that, while specific to London, this character is quite common within the city, common enough to warrant inclusion as a Theophrastan character. These characters, 'seem indigenous to the soil' and 'you meet them, every day, in the streets of London.'<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> *SBB*, p.272.

<sup>78</sup> *SBB*, p.271.

While Dickens's 'Tales' in the fourth section expand into longer narratives and indeed chapters at times, and while within these narratives, character seems to lose out to the development of Dickens the novelist, I wish to refute this idea. A critic like Smeed, who insists on Dickens's exclusion from writers of character, is too rigid in their understanding of character. Instead of looking at character as a literary form strict in its structure- like a sonnet- we should think of character as a way of looking at how character is written and understood in literature. Smeed repeatedly likens Dickens's writing of eccentrics and grotesques as evidence against character but we have already seen that character can be written to represent types.<sup>79</sup>

Read in its modern published format, it may seem that *SBB* is a progression from character to narrative; however the very nature of the sporadic publishing of the sketches means that we, the modern reader, rarely read the sketches in the way in which they were originally published. For instance, even my analysis is based on the structure of the sketches given to me in the Nonesuch publication of *SBB* from 2007. The various sketches collected in *SBB* were originally published over a four year period and were published in several different magazines. For example, the first selection of sketches in modern editions, 'Beadle, Parish Engine, Schoolmaster' were originally the nineteenth selection of sketches to be published, first appearing on 28<sup>th</sup> of February 1835 in *The Evening Chronicle*.<sup>80</sup> At this point, Dickens had already published eighteen other sketches in two other magazines. In fact, the first seven sketches published by Dickens between December 1833 and August 1834 are now published in the 'Tales' section of modern editions near the end of the collections. Therefore, the idea that Dickens's writing was progressing from sketch to narrative

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<sup>79</sup> Smeed, p.240-241.

<sup>80</sup> A detailed table of publication dates can be found in *Dickens's Uncollected Magazine and Newspaper Sketches as Originally Composed and Published 1833-1836*, ed. by Robert C. Hanna (New York: AMS Press Inc, 2012).

holds up in modern editions of the collected sketches, but if we look at how and when the original publications appeared the argument holds no water. In fact, Dickens had published some of his more narrative sketches before the more character-style sketches. Narrative and character are not in fact separate forms of writing but rather can be used together to create richer characters. Using the original publication dates of Dickens's sketches can refute the claim by certain critics that Dickens's writing progressed away from character and that character is a form used as an 'apprenticeship' to authorship.

Another objection to this idea comes when looking at Dickens's *Book of Memoranda*. In this book, we can see where Dickens developed and stored some of his ideas. The book itself is a mixture of plot and character ideas showing that Dickens was just as focused on character as plot for the basis for a story. The book was begun in January of 1855, when Dickens was at the height of his publishing career. A few of the ideas and names listed have been traced or identified in his works published after the book was begun. Some of the ideas Dickens writes are detailed; characters are given names and at times, dialogue is written out. Other times, there is little more than a two-word sketch of an idea. For the most part, the ideas in his *Book of Memoranda* are focused on characters. What is interesting to note is that scattered in the fuller descriptions of ideas are occasional phrases reminiscent of character titles. Using his memory of recognisable types, Dickens needs little more than 'The Charwoman' or 'The Tax-Gatherer' to describe the idea in his book. Originally meant as a notebook for only his eyes, Dickens writes out the ideas he needs further explanation to remember for later use and notes in the margins around previous thoughts when he has used them so as not to repeat himself later on. Therefore, the idea bearing fewer details must have been easily memorable to him, enough so that he did not need further information should he flesh out the

idea in a later work. These two character titles, and other examples like them throughout the book, show that Dickens was using character skills in his writing. While after *SBB* was published in collected volumes, Dickens may not have written in the direct Theophrastan character style, he clearly used similar skills in creating his characters and his later works.

I would like to claim that the two forms of writing, the novel and the sketch (character) can be used together rather than one proceeding or being ‘practice’ for the other. Smeed even acknowledges that the differentiation between character and narrative is not easily identifiable, ‘The question of how far a ‘character’ may hint at development without turning into something nearer a short story is again not readily observable’.<sup>81</sup> Two contemporary reviews of Dickens’s sketch ‘The Tuggs at Ramsgate’, a sketch seemingly more narrative in style than character, point to the tale and Boz’s writing as representing true character and manners. The *Sheffield Independent*, and *Yorkshire and Derbyshire Advertiser* wrote in April of 1836, ‘The Tuggs at Ramsgate,’ is by ‘Boz’, whose sketches of character and manners are so true to life, that they are everywhere popular.’<sup>82</sup> Likewise, *Woolmer’s Exeter and Plymouth Gazette* in May of 1836 describes ‘Tuggs at Ramsgate’ as ‘a good specimen of drollery and acuteness, in giving the outlines of characters, manners, &c.’<sup>83</sup> Looking at character, not as a separate literary form or as ‘practice’ or ‘apprenticeship’ to authorship, and instead an understanding of character enhances the characters created within narrative and novels can help literary critics and authors to understand character and the role of character in the cultural memory of a story.

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<sup>81</sup> Smeed, p.282.

<sup>82</sup> Hanna, p.xxvi.

<sup>83</sup> Hanna, p.xxvi.

Dickens is not the only canonical writer to be connected to charactery. In 1966 John Lothian published his study *Shakespeare's Charactery: A Book of 'Characters' from Shakespeare*. Lothian's study of Shakespeare's characters reads more like what the modern reader would see simply as an encyclopaedia or dictionary of characters; however, within his introduction Lothian specifically connects his collection to Shakespeare's adherence to charactery. Lothian observes what we have seen in Dickens, that charactery as a genre is more varied than many critics would define it. He says:

Obviously, terms which should include all kinds of 'character' would define none! [...] It would seem best to take the 'character' as we take the novel, namely as a literary 'kind' of very great variety of form and content, of which a particular mode may be the fashion of the moment.<sup>84</sup>

Lothian's primary reason for collecting Shakespeare's characters into charactery is Shakespeare's use of dramatic 'types' in various forms as the basis for his characters. This study of charactery groups characters into primary categories such as 'Princes and High Estates' then secondary categories within these such as 'courtly princes' and 'courtiers'. Likewise 'Professions and trades' is further broken down into 'Servants', 'Actors', 'The Fool and Jester', and 'Miscellaneous'. Lothian's use of 'types' to explain 'characters' echoes the development of the form of charactery into a more narrative form, and this was well before the emergence of the novel as the predominant literary form. Later in this chapter we will see a similar breakdown of characters in many dictionaries and encyclopaedias of Dickens's characters. In Lothian's work we see a different form of charactery entirely, that of the genre imposed on the pre-existing text of an author. Shakespeare himself did not write charactery in its Theophrastus model, but what Lothian is arguing is that the

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<sup>84</sup> John M Lothian, *Shakespeare's Charactery: A Book of 'Characters' from Shakespeare* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1966). p.4.



correlation of the genre to Shakespeare's work is nonetheless relevant due to the descriptive style, despite lacking in form. Lothian argues, 'It is not enough to say that these 'characters' are not Theophrastan [...] But they are the fruit of a similar kind of literary activity'.<sup>85</sup> If we were to open up the classification of the genre, many more writers might be found to practise character and looking at character thus would only advance our understanding of it. Lothian even argues that the richness of Shakespeare's characters is what makes them both memorable and worthy of further study, much like my argument on Dickens's characters. Shakespeare's character is not brief individual sketches of character but rather evident within his stories. Nevertheless his characters still leap from the page as vivid beings not restricted by their narrative. This same argument can be applied to Dickens's characters; 'characters' as Shakespeare uses them are not tediously repetitive, like something automatic, but convey a sense of life; they give life to those about them, as well as receive it from them; they live in and by one another'.<sup>86</sup>

Many writers within the developing form of the novel were influenced by dramatic types and if dramatic types were influenced by character then there is clearly an echo of character within some novelists' characters, novelists such as the great character creator Dickens. Even looking at the founder of character, there is some evidence that Theophrastus was himself influenced by theatre. While directly influenced by his teacher, Aristotle, Theophrastus may also have been influenced by Menander, the ancient Greek dramatist; Theophrastus may even have been writing specifically to write a collection of 'stock' theatre characters.<sup>87</sup> Beecher connects Theophrastus's characters to the *dramatis personae* of the Italian theatre, the

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<sup>85</sup> Lothian, p.5.

<sup>86</sup> Lothian, p. 15.

<sup>87</sup> Beecher, p.41.

comedia erudita in the sixteenth century.<sup>88</sup> Dickens himself was greatly interested in the theatre. His letters to friends are filled with responses about and dates to attend shows and review what they had seen. Juliet John argues that Dickens's interest in theatre and melodrama was what made him write external character (characters' actions and emotions) as a way of signifying the psychology of the mind.<sup>89</sup>

While Dickens was plagued by unauthorised theatrical adaptations of his novels, throughout his life he also wrote and acted in his own amateur theatricals. As Dickens developed into a serial novelist, throughout his career he also enjoyed writing shorter journal pieces (nonfiction and fiction), giving speeches, writing and performing plays, and adapting his own novels into short performances. Dickens's varying of style, form, and content allowed his writings to reach a wide audience and also allowed him the freedom to experiment with forms of character development.

## **2.2. Character in Visual form**

Even with the name 'portrait', the French style of character was still primarily written. However, many anthologies of character and sketches included vivid and detailed images. By first looking at how visual forms of character without written narrative accompanying them still portray a kind of narrative in their representation of character we can understand how Dickens later used visual elements in his writing to enhance or support his narrative descriptions of character. When portrayed strongly enough, as the coming examples will show, written narration and visual representations complement one another.

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<sup>88</sup> Beecher, p.41. Beecher lists the lackey, the quack doctor, the pendant, the freeloader and the braggart soldier as examples of 'characters' which cross over from Theophrastus to the comedia erudite.

<sup>89</sup> John, pp.6-8.

The popular Victorian painter William Powell Frith often painted large scenes filled with people, but never left a face undistinguished in the crowd. Likewise, Dickens wrote innumerable minor characters that at once became demonstrative of the character of the London streets while remaining at the same time individuals in their own right. Looking at one of Frith's most famous works, *Derby Day* (Figure 9), each individual painted is essential to the overall atmosphere of the Derby. Taking this painting as a visual example of what Dickens wrote verbally, each character painted tells a story immediately upon examination.

Whether consciously or unconsciously, Frith, like many other artists of the time, made use of certain commonly held beliefs about physical appearance and personality to tell the stories he could not write. One critic wrote in the *Saturday Review* in 1862, 'We must literally read an incident picture as we must read a novel, if we wish to enjoy it and do it justice. We must throw ourselves into the plot of the painter as into that of the novelist, and gradually learn his characters as the incidents come upon us one after another.'<sup>90</sup> The detail in Frith's paintings, from foreground to background, shows that every character was important to the overall reading of the painting. Mary Cowling writes in her work on *The Artist as Anthropologist*, 'artists like Frith intended that every part of these pictures should be read, including the human face, its features and its expression'.<sup>91</sup>

Frith's expansive paintings like *Derby Day* and *The Railway Station* are illustrative of both the individuals that people them (and the socio-economic and labouring types represented therein) and the larger scene as a whole; in other words the 'character' of the *Derby Day* and the *Railway Station* are just as important as the characters that people them. In her analysis of *Derby Day*, Cowling looks at the

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<sup>90</sup> Mary Cowling, *The Artist as Anthropologist: The Representation of Type and Character in Victorian Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989). p.2.

<sup>91</sup> Cowling, p. 2.

larger painting as a whole statement made up of the smaller groups of characters within it:

[*Derby Day*] may claim to present a veritable microcosm of contemporary society. At once the consequence and the expression of modern industrialism, the urban crowd, the London crowd, especially, constituted an interesting phenomenon for observers of humanity.<sup>92</sup>

However, even as the modern viewer can analyse the painting for its anthropological representations, Cowling points out that there is a certain level of understanding of the characters that the modern viewer has trouble identifying; this trouble is grounded in our lack of knowledge of physiognomic representations:

But it is also a matter of acquiring those methods of picture reading which were second nature to an educated Victorian; and of familiarizing ourselves with the kind of expectations which were brought to the picture, as regards both the characters themselves and the way in which artists habitually represented and manipulated them.<sup>93</sup>

This is not to say that every painter or viewer agreed with physiognomy or even consciously used physiognomic traits in their characters but rather the function of reading a character visually as practised by proponents of physiognomy could be understood to apply in non-physiognomic works such as paintings and novel illustrations.

The practices of physiognomy, phrenology, and pathognomy, while disproven in modern science, were commonly believed and followed in the Victorian era. Even artists who claimed not to use such biased beliefs use features common in physiognomy research. The importance is that the artists and writers of the time were as caught up in physiognomic definitions and characteristics as the viewers and readers. Looking closer at *Derby Day* (Figure 10), there are many individual stories present in the foreground alone. Noted phisognomist Lavater often insisted on the

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<sup>92</sup> Cowling, p.4.

<sup>93</sup> Cowling, p.2.

importance of clothes in reading a person; this is one of the few physiognomic functions that the modern viewer will admit to using. Recognizable first by their finer clothes, the men and women in and around the first carriage are clearly the higher class assembled. Immediately behind their carriage is the more crowded and obviously not privately owned middle class coach. In front of both carriages, on the ground, are some of the lower class. From the modern perspective, these distinctions are obvious even without physiognomy. However, artists such as Frith included many finer classifications which many not be as obvious to the modern viewer. As Mary Cowling explains in *The Artist as Anthropologist*:

And how many people would recognize the shop-boy, as such, or the university man; the truly vicious man among so many picturesque rogues; the country farmer and his wife; or even the German visitors; or the soldier's companion as, specifically, a cook?'<sup>94</sup>

If we do not understand or even see these or similar types, our modern eye might draw instantly to the most recognizable, perhaps the rich and the poor in contrast to one another, and define them as our hero and villain (irrespective of which is which role). These then, become our main characters and their opposition becomes our story. Continuing with this assumed analogy, without acknowledging it, the crowd around and behind the 'story' are the minor characters. Our modern eye may still find these characters interesting but only in that they are secondary to the immediate attraction. What Frith, and a few other Victorian illustrators and painters do well is maintain the individuality and importance of even the 'background' characters. Without the stands full of spectators, for example, the painting could not be called Derby Day, for it is only in the presence of the stands that the Derby is present. But Frith's characters are still believable to the modern eye, even if not all of their stories are discernible.

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<sup>94</sup> Cowling, p.1.



Figure 9: *Derby Day*, by W. P. Frith (1856-8). Image© Tate Gallery.





**Figure 10: Inset *Derby Day***

Though many artists used physiognomy to tell character visually, often artists who used the practice too liberally were criticized for caricature or prejudice. One such illustrator is the much earlier William Hogarth. To the modern eye, Hogarth's exaggerated types are cartoonish. Figure 11 presents a scene similar to Dickens's 'Gin Shop' in *SBB*. His figures are not anatomically exact and their facial features are grotesque, yet Hogarth was able to instantly convey an emotion and story behind each character whether the viewer understands the finer points of physiognomy or not. While the modern viewer can recognise the type represented in the neglectful mother dropping her baby in the foreground of *Gin Lane*, the extreme exaggeration of the representation alienates Hogarth's mother from a modern depiction of a neglectful mother. Thus, what is instructive as well as illustrative in Hogarth's time is somewhat comic to the modern viewer.



**Figure 11: *Gin Lane*, by William Hogarth (1751). Image© Tate Gallery**

Therefore, taking Cowling's idea that the modern viewer of Hogarth or Frith might be missing aspects of the images due to our different cultural grounding, might the claim that Dickens's characters are little more than grotesques or caricatures also be an overstatement? What Hogarth was representing visually, Dickens has 'drawn' verbally and both are likewise criticized for exaggeration and caricature by the modern viewer and reader.

However, if we approach the characters expressed as representative of a type, they no longer need to be realistically exact. Rather, each physical feature, each facial expression, and each action presented become indicative of this type and ultimately aims to support the story ascribed to each character. The Victorians themselves used



the word 'type' to mean a character, even an exaggerated form: "Type' is a word as common to Victorian anthropology as it is to art criticism, and one that carries the same meaning whether applied to the real or to the painted figure.'<sup>95</sup> As Cowling aptly presents it, 'We find [Hogarth's] figures strange because they are so specifically and conspicuously conceived in terms of beliefs about human nature long dismissed as the results of prejudice and superstition. Hence, we no longer find them convincing...'<sup>96</sup>

The reader post-Freud and modernism compared to the Victorian reader, needs less exaggerated physical features on characters because they are more practised at reading the psychological. The modern reader can look beyond grotesque characteristics in a character and often interprets a character's being based on their action within a story rather than their features. Yet, visual clues are still often used. A reader, having even the most basic understanding of modern psychology, can assume 'there must be some connection between thoughts (or the soul, or the mind) and the face' and that 'the face seems to express a great deal of what that person has come to mean'.<sup>97</sup> James Elkins claims that physiognomy and its 'cousin' caricature seem to trivialise emotion and thus insist on comic humour to convey meaning. He says that physiognomy is 'inseparable from inadvertent humour'.<sup>98</sup>

But while humour, inadvertent or intended, might trivialise a dramatic intent to the post-modern viewer, the nineteenth-century reader would not have looked on the two as entirely separate. In his letters, Dickens often writes to friends of his describing the latest instalment he was writing as 'droll'. At times, Dickens's own words seem to contradict the novel. For instance, on writing the first number of *GE*,

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<sup>95</sup> Cowling, p.183.

<sup>96</sup> Cowling, p.5.

<sup>97</sup> James Elkins, *Pictures of the Body: Pain and Metamorphosis* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999). pp. 82 and 79.

<sup>98</sup> Elkins, p.76.

certainly not considered by modern viewers as humorous, Dickens wrote to John Forster:

You will not have to complain of the want of humour as in the Tale of Two Cities [sic]. I have made the opening, I hope, in its general effect exceedingly droll. I have put a child and a good-natured foolish man, in relations that seem to me very funny. Of course I have got in the pivot on which the story will turn too-and which indeed, as you will remember, was the grotesque tragi-comic conception that first encouraged me...<sup>99</sup>

For the nineteenth-century reader, a character could be equally tragic, comic, droll, and serious even in exaggeration. Like Hogarth's exaggerated characters, Dickens's characters could be humorous and dramatic, relationships the nineteenth-century reader would be more familiar with.

Dickens is still often dismissed as a caricaturist, as if this detracts from the significance of his characters. This view is often substantiated by the illustrations in his novels. While Dickens worked with many illustrators throughout his career, he always held a majority amount of creative control over each one, often rejecting or changing illustrators if their work was not exactly indicative of what Dickens wanted to be visualised. One can assume that if Dickens had been an accomplished artist he would most likely have illustrated his own work, eliminating the third party distraction of illustrator entirely. Therefore, though the illustrations in Dickens's books are not his own, they are as close to his own as could be. For example, Dickens writes to George Cruikshank in 1838 about an illustration for *PP*, 'I have described a "small" kettle for one on the fire- a "small" black teapot on the table with a little tray & so forth- and a two ounce tin tea canister. Also a shawl hanging up- and the cat & kittens before the fire'.<sup>100</sup> The minute, seemingly unimportant, detail in Dickens's description for the illustration is proof of how important he felt his illustrations to be.

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<sup>99</sup> *Letters*, Vol.9, p.325.

<sup>100</sup> *Letters*, Vol.1, p.353.

Dickens also viewed the settings around which the characters would appear in illustrations as significant. In a way, the settings themselves could be read as physiognomic. Like Frith's railway station or racetrack, the objects and structure around Dickens's characters were as important a 'character' as the people. One notable example of this is *OCS* where the character of the shop is so important to the story that it becomes the title. In writing to the illustrator Samuel Williams in 1840 about an image of Little Nell asleep in the shop, Dickens wrote:

The object being to shew the child in the midst of a crowd of uncongenial and ancient things, Mr. Dickens scarcely feels the very pretty drawing inclosed [sic], as carrying out his idea: the room being to all appearance an exceedingly comfortable one pair, and the sleeper being in a very enviable condition. If the composition would admit of a few grim, ugly articles seen through a doorway beyond, for instance, and giving a notion of great gloom outside the little room and surrounding the chamber, it would be much better.<sup>101</sup>



**Figure 12:** *The child in her gentle slumber*, by Samuel Williams (1840). Image© Charles Dickens Museum

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<sup>101</sup> *Letters*, Vol.2, p.49.

Samuel Williams's resulting image, Figure 12, ended up being the only illustration done by him even though he did engrave some of the other illustrations by Cattermole and Phiz for *MHC*. Even in all of the correspondence which as survived from Dickens, the above letter is the only one from Dickens to Williams. We only have the final published image and not the early image Dickens wrote to Williams about. Williams does not seem to have done much outside of the window, unless it was to perhaps obscure the window and the outside in general. The darkened doorway behind Nell is mostly indistinguishable except for the faint outline of a figure- possibly the 'ancient armour' described later in a review. Around Nell are numerous grimacing objects, perhaps the 'ugly' and 'uncongenial' objects of Dickens's letter.

Even though the only illustration designed by Williams, it struck a chord with readers and Dickens himself. An anonymous review in the *Athenaeum* in 1840 spoke directly about the image:

Look at the Artist's picture of the Child, asleep in her little bed, surrounded, or rather mobbed, by ancient armour, and arms, antique furniture, and relics sacred and profane, hideous or grotesque:- it is like an allegory of the peace and innocence of Childhood in the midst of violence, superstition, and all the hateful or hurtful Passions of the world.<sup>102</sup>

Dickens was so touched by the review of this illustration he found the identity of the reviewer to be Thomas Hood and ends his 'Preface to the First Cheap Edition of 1848' with a mention of the review.

Character in the illustrations to his novels was so important to Dickens, whether the character is a person or thing or setting, that when it came to publishing a separate version of *OCS* outside of *MHC*, Dickens added more text around Williams's illustration. While reviews such as Hood's hinted that readers saw what

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<sup>102</sup> Jane R. Cohen, 'Charles Dickens and his Original Illustrators', in *Knowledge Bank, Ohio State University* <<http://kb.osu.edu>> [accessed 26 January 2015] p.137

Dickens himself had intended in Williams's illustration, Dickens decided to make such an analysis more overt in the complete *OCS*. In Dickens's new words, he breaks the fourth wall and addresses the relationship between illustration and text directly. Dickens even parrots Hood's review and mentions that the image 'seemed to exist in a kind of allegory'.<sup>103</sup>

Dickens's own words on the importance of illustration are set opposite the foreboding image of Nell in her bed. These words are not only indicative of the relationship of character to illustration in Dickens's novels but also of Dickens's own relationship to his illustrations when visualising his characters. Dickens writes as the narrator:

We are so much in the habit of allowing impressions to be made upon us by external objects, which should be produced by reflection alone, but which, without such visible aids, often escape us, that I am not sure I should have been so thoroughly possessed by this one subject, but for the heaps of fantastic things I had seen huddled together in the curiosity dealer's warehouse. These, crowding on my mind, in connection with the child, and gathering round her, as it were, brought her condition palpably before me. I had her image, without any effort of imagination, surrounded and beset by everything that was foreign to its nature, and farthest removed from the sympathies of her sex and age.<sup>104</sup>

Reflecting on character in visual form, Dickens himself seems to contemplate how character is only enhanced, even in its opposition to the objects and setting external to it. Additionally, character described in textual narrative is likewise enhanced by the visual mirror of writers' words.

In looking at character in visual forms, albeit briefly, we have seen how text and visual can work together to create a new idea of character but also that an image can contain its own narrative of character; whether the character be person, place, or thing, or indeed a combination of these, the history of character in visual form is as rich as that of character in literature.

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<sup>103</sup> Charles Dickens, *The Old Curiosity Shop* (London: Wordsworth, 2001). p.14.

<sup>104</sup> *OCS*, pp.13-14.

### 2.3. Character Theory

In many critical character studies, character is often analysed in relation or in opposition to something else. For example, character in stories are analysed in relation to their resemblance to real people; a character is thus deemed a 'success' or a 'failure' depending on how 'real' they come across. Another way of reading characters in a story is in relation to their role or function within the story (their contribution to the story's structure). More recently, characters have begun to be analysed by their relationship to readers. However, this latter method is not new. In fact, one could argue that it is the original critical approach taken to Dickens's works since many of the early analyses of Dickens are often more like personal reviews. However, many of these works come before the advent of literary criticism and so often these critics write about personal taste rather than objective analyses.

The chronological trajectory of Dickensian criticism often fluctuated between critics identifying Dickens as a genius or overly sentimental trash and everything in between. Even before literary criticism developed as a discipline, George Henry Lewes wrote, 'Criticism has to consider Art under two aspects, that of emotional pleasure, and that of technical pleasure'.<sup>105</sup> Brian Rosenberg, writing over a century later; echoes this conflict of critics when looking at Dickens; Dickens's characters might come across as technically flawed but nevertheless have continually evoked pleasure:

Most models that would anatomize the characters of other major novelists in English simply cannot account for the success of Dickens. As a consequence, many critics have found themselves in the uncomfortable position of claiming that Dickens's characters fail although they appear to succeed, or succeed although they ought to fail.<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>105</sup> George Henry Lewes, 'Dickens in Relation to Criticism', in *The Dickens Critics*, ed. by George H. Ford and Lauriat Lane, Jr. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1872; 1966), pp. 54-74. P.66.

<sup>106</sup> Brian Rosenberg, *Little Dorrit's Shadows: Character and Contradiction in Dickens* (Columbia: University of Missouri, 1996). P.13.

Rosenberg sets out the approaches to character criticism as:

[1] Whereas character criticism has traditionally attended to the presence (or absence of similarities between literary characters and human beings, more attention is generally paid not to the differences between them [...] [2] discussions of characterization have in the past tended to focus on the relations either between characters and authors or, especially, between characters and the people they represent, increased scrutiny is being directed now at the relations between characters and readers [...] [3] more effort is made now to place the ideas about character at any particular moment within a larger cultural and historical context.<sup>107</sup>

To these approaches to character theory, Rosenberg later adds that of character versus structure. All four of Rosenberg's forms of character study have been instrumental in the development of Dickens studies.

The initial development of Dickens studies was often focused around Dickens's popularity and the taste of his reviewers (for in fact the critical works often read more like reviews than analyses). In 1841, Edgar Allan Poe claimed that Dickens's characters were a success because people liked them, 'Were these creations of Mr. Dickens' really caricatures they would not live in public estimation beyond the hour of their first survey.'<sup>108</sup> Davis Masson notes in 1859, that even if one were to negatively critique current literature, Dickens's popularity and existence in popular culture would exempt him from critique:

But let anyone observe our current table-talk or our current literature, and, despite this profession of dissatisfaction, and in the very circles where it most abounds, let him note how gladly Dickens is used, and how frequently his phrases, his fancies, and the names of his characters come in'.<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> Rosenberg, pp.3-4.

<sup>108</sup> Edgar Allan Poe, 'The Old Curiosity Shop', in *The Dickens Critics*, ed. by George H. Ford and Lauriat Lane, Jr. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1841; 1966), pp. 19-25. P.22.

<sup>109</sup> David Masson, 'Dickens and Thackeray', in *The Dickens Critics*, ed. by George H. Ford and Lauriat Lane, Jr. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1859; 1966), pp. 25-38. P.37.

In the late nineteenth century, critics began to analyse characters psychologically and in relation to the interiority of real humans. Unlike work on the originals of Dickens's characters, it was now not enough that Dickens's characters seemed to play out the foibles and characteristics of real people, they now needed to think and feel like real people. Henry James decided that Dickens's characters failed this test, 'It is hardly too much to say that every character here put before us is a mere bundle of eccentricities, animated by no principle of nature whatever'.<sup>110</sup>

However, in the early years of looking at the psychology of characters, many critics still acknowledged the success of Dickens, despite his characters' flaws. Dickens was still balanced between being critically reviled and publically adored. Alice Meynell writes in 1903, 'There is laughter for his humor [sic], tears for his pathos, praise for his spirit, and contempt for his authorship'.<sup>111</sup> In order to reconcile the disparity between Dickens's popularity and his 'critical failures' (at the turn of the century), literary critics began to see Dickens's characters as a special case. These characters were not like real people, they were 'flat', they had no psychological depth, or they were caricatures but they were successful in being what they were. T. S. Eliot writes in 1927, 'Dickens excelled in character; in the creation of characters of greater intensity than human beings'.<sup>112</sup>

It is in this period when the first of Rosenberg's forms of character study becomes most prominent, that of character in relation to (or opposite from) real people. However, as I have said, in the case of Dickens, critics allow that Dickens's characters are not real, but are still successful. One of the major works to develop this

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<sup>110</sup> Henry James, 'The Limitations of Dickens', in *The Dickens Critics*, ed. by Lauriat Lane, Jr. and George H. Ford (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1865; 1966), pp. 48-54.

<sup>111</sup> Alice Meynell, 'Charles Dickens as a Man of Letters', in *The Dickens Critics*, ed. by George H. Ford and Lauriat Lane, Jr. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1903; 1966), pp. 95-109. p.95.

<sup>112</sup> T. S. Eliot, 'Wilkie Collins and Dickens', in *The Dickens Critics*, ed. by George H. Ford and Lauriat Lane, Jr. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1927; 1966), pp. 151-53. p.151.



idea and relate it to Dickens was E. M. Forster's *Aspects of the Novel*. Forster's analyses of characters as either 'flat' or 'round' was a reading of characters in relation to real human beings, 'round or lifelike characters were greater achievements than flat or simplified ones'.<sup>113</sup>

To some critics, 'flat' is interchangeable with 'grotesque', 'caricature', 'eccentric', 'comic', and other similar designations describing characters who have single functions within the novel or display no growth. Edwin Eigner talks of Dickens's 'flat' characters as supporting and mirroring the main plot centred on the hero or main character;

David's [David Copperfield] life is a necessary and inoffensive scaffold on which the shenanigans of Micawber and the rest could be staged. [...] it is possible to see how each of them represents a mistaken alternative to the sort of Bildung the book as a whole is recommending. [...] they represent David's undeveloped impulses, each of which, if he settles for anything less than full harmony, he is in dreadful danger of becoming.<sup>114</sup>

What Eigner is saying is that Dickens chose not to fully develop certain characters because their very 'flatness' is a result of the function.

Forster's own definition of flat characters likens them to caricatures and types, 'In their purest form, they are constructed round a single idea or quality'.<sup>115</sup> For this definition he uses Dickens's character Mrs Micawber as an example, saying that her repeated phrase 'I will never desert Mr. Micawber' represents and indeed makes her character.<sup>116</sup> However, while using Mrs Micawber as an example, and continuing to reference Dickens's characters, Forster's own distinction of flat and round characters and Dickens's place within said analysis, breaks down. Where a lot of critics would say that flat characters are nearly always minor characters, Forster points out

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<sup>113</sup> Rosenberg, p.7.

<sup>114</sup> Eigner, p.72.

<sup>115</sup> EM Forster, *Aspects of the Novel* (London: Edward Arnold Publishers, 1963). p.65.

<sup>116</sup> Forster, p.65.

Dickens is a different case. According to Forster, 'Dickens's people are nearly all flat. [...] Nearly everyone can be summed up in a sentence, and yet there is this wonderful feeling of human depth'.<sup>117</sup> In two sentences, Forster manages to call Dickens's characters flat but with human depth. This is because he acknowledged that however Dickens wrote, he was successful. This contradiction continues when Forster admits that Dickens 'does use types and caricatures, people whom we recognise the instant they re-enter', a statement that is nearly identical to Forster's earlier example of Mrs Micawber.<sup>118</sup> However, in the same statement Forster continues despite this, Dickens 'yet achieves effects that are not mechanical and a vision of humanity that is not shallow'.<sup>119</sup>

Perhaps Forster's main confusion lies in the fact that Dickens's characters are undoubtedly a special case. Dickens's characters, no matter how grotesque or 'flat' or typified, are more memorable than most main characters of the same novels. Writing at about the same time, George Orwell takes this same stance on Dickens's characters; 'They are monsters, but at any rate, they exist. [...] even if the people who remember them hardly think of them as human beings'.<sup>120</sup> Arnold Kettle likens Dickens's characters to static symbols rather than developing interior characters. He refrains from calling either type of character more successful than the other since both can be equally memorable.<sup>121</sup>

In fact, by this time, although critics were often negative about Dickens's caricaturist characters and overly sentimental plots, they often acknowledge his importance to the history of British literature. Dickens has started to become a

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<sup>117</sup> Forster, p.68.

<sup>118</sup> Forster, p.69.

<sup>119</sup> Forster, p.69.

<sup>120</sup> George Orwell, 'Charles Dickens', in *The Dickens Critics*, ed. by George H. Ford and Lauriat Lane, Jr. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1940; 1966), pp. 157-71. P.166.

<sup>121</sup> Arnold Kettle, 'Dickens: Oliver Twist', in *The Dickens Critics*, ed. by George H. Ford and Lauriat Lane, Jr. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1950; 1966), pp. 252-70. Pp.254-255.

symbol rather than a work to be critiqued. George Santayana, George Orwell, and George Ford all relate Dickens to childhood and nostalgia, 'Their [characters] names should be in every child's mouth; they ought to be adopted members of every household'<sup>122</sup>, 'Many children begin to know his characters by sight before they can even read'<sup>123</sup>, and 'The fondness most children have for *David Copperfield* is readily understandable'.<sup>124</sup> Dickens was so embedded in British literary history and popular culture that his stories became likened to folklore, a national institution rather than work to be critiqued. Edmund Wilson wrote, 'He has become for the English middle class so much one of the articles of their creed'.<sup>125</sup> George Orwell extends the idea of Dickens as an institution even further, again noting that taste is no longer an aspect of where Dickens stands in literary criticism, 'Whether you approve of him or not, he is *there*, like the Nelson Column. At any moment some scene or character, which may come from some book you cannot even remember the name of, is liable to drop into your mind'.<sup>126</sup> Even from the twenty-first century, Dickens still persists as a national symbol, 'his ability to transcend the artistic realm has persisted, and if anything intensified, so that the idea of Dickens has become conflated with the idea of the Victorian period and with versions of Englishness'.<sup>127</sup>

The popularity of Dickens's works, despite critical views, and their persistence in British culture led some critics to align his works to folklore and fairy tales; the point being made was that his characters were as recognisable to readers as the princes and princesses of fairy tales. G. K. Chesterton anticipates this connection in 1906:

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<sup>122</sup> George Santayana, 'Dickens', in *The Dickens Critics*, ed. by George H. Ford and Lauriat Lane, Jr. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1921; 1966), pp. 135-51. P.151.

<sup>123</sup> Orwell, p.158.

<sup>124</sup> George Ford, 'David Copperfield', in *The Dickens Critics*, ed. by George H. Ford and Lauriat Lane, Jr. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1958; 1966), pp. 349-66. P.349.

<sup>125</sup> Edmund Wilson, *The Wound and the Bow* (London: Martin Seckler & Warburg Ltd, 1939). P.1.

<sup>126</sup> Orwell, p.158.

<sup>127</sup> Juliet John, *Dickens and Mass Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010). P.9.

Mr. Samuel Pickwick is not the fairy; he is the fairy prince; that is to say, he is the abstract wanderer and wonderer [...] sustained with that merry fatalism that is natural to immortal beings- sustained by that hint of divinity which tells him in the darkest hour that he is doomed to live happily ever after.<sup>128</sup>

This connection of Dickens's characters to folklore is again a way for critics to reconcile the sentimental or exaggerated nature of Dickens characters (which might otherwise be critiqued negatively) with his continued popularity. Perhaps, characters needn't be likened to 'real' people in order for them to be 'successful' after all. As Graham Greene wrote in 1950, 'We no more believe in the temporal existence of Fagin or Bill Sikes than we believe in the existence of that Giant whom Jack slew as he bellowed his Fe Fi Fo Fum'.<sup>129</sup>

With this new concentration on folklore, character need not be deemed 'successful' on its own, but analysed in relation to the story's plot. Rather than a character's existence in written form being based around itself, as in character, when analysing character in larger narration such as novels, critics often insist that a character can be understood either by its relation to the plot as a whole or its relation to the central character (and central plot). For many critics, these distinctions are broken down into definitions of minor versus major characters and similar nomenclatures such as 'supporting', 'assisting', 'substituting', and innumerable more specific names. This is Rosenberg's fourth form of character analysis, that of character and structure.

Admittedly, certain theoretical practices within literary theory support the interaction of character and function more than others. Robert Higbie, in his work *Character and Structure in the English Novel*, acknowledges the character-function

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<sup>128</sup> GK Chesterton, 'The Pickwick Papers', in *The Dickens Critics*, ed. by George H. Ford and Lauriat Lane, Jr. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1906; 1966), pp. 109-21. P.116.

<sup>129</sup> Graham Greene, 'The Young Dickens', in *The Dickens Critics*, ed. by George H. Ford and Lauriat Lane, Jr. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1950; 1966), pp. 244-52. P.147.

relationship being particularly important to structuralism while also suggesting that this very notion is inherent in post-writing and even post-reading; he writes, 'structuralist theory has the advantage of seeing characters as functions of a larger whole'.<sup>130</sup> However, 'Literature is not produced by systems, whether structuralist or Marxist, nor Frye's archetypes; it is produced by particular writers, working in particular cultures at particular historical moments.'<sup>131</sup> In other words, reading a novel and interpreting the character functions and structures within is a different approach to reading than considering the original 'intent', if there be one, of the author. Can there be a different interpretation of character between post-reading and post-writing?

Higbie also points to the importance for the critic and even the reader, of reading the character on the page as a character and not as a real person, in order to maintain the amount of distance necessary for critical understanding. However, this idea is of course the antithesis of character which exists to be recognizable as 'real people.' Further to this contradiction Higbie faces contradictions of his own within his structure of character. While defining 'secondary object-characters' and 'auxiliary customers' as existing solely for 'thematic purposes', he also mentions 'secondary subject' characters who defy 'plot control'.<sup>132</sup> He goes on to define 'character' as a whole '[being] eccentric, independent, uncontrolled.'<sup>133</sup>

In looking at his different interpretations of character, Higbie uses Dickens as an example of how writers can place their characters in different relations to the readers given a writer's particular intent. Dickens's minor characters, Higbie suggests, are not tied to the larger function of the plot- even though in calling them

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<sup>130</sup> Higbie, p.4.

<sup>131</sup> Higbie, p.5.

<sup>132</sup> Higbie, pp.29 and 67.

<sup>133</sup> Higbie, p.67.

‘minor’ Higbie is connecting these characters to a function. Mrs Gamp is used as an exception, a comic character who is not directly needed for the main plot centred around the hero but is essential to the story because of her comic attraction; ‘A character like Mrs Gamp has many traits which are unrelated to her plot role, indeed opposed to it, making her [...] function as a secondary subject instead of playing the villainous role we would expect’.<sup>134</sup> In general, Dickens ‘asks our sympathy for many minor characters whom previous novelists would only ask us to laugh at; he asks us to laugh with them as well’.<sup>135</sup> Higbie further distinguishes Dickens’s characters as different to others because, where minor characters are often seen ‘as members of an inferior order who can’t be allowed the importance or privileges of central characters’, ‘Dickens largely overcomes this disadvantage’.<sup>136</sup>

Many critics often cite Dickens’s characterisation and characters as examples when defining and analysing character and the novel in general. Eigner talks about subplots in relation to central plot and cites the minor characters in *OCS* and *DC* as examples. For Eigner, the plots around minor characters in these novels serve the function of mirroring or supporting the central hero plot<sup>137</sup> but ‘are carefully controlled; they flank Nell’s story [and David’s] never pre-empting it, never even becoming parts of it in any cause-and-effect way’.<sup>138</sup>

Mario Praz also talks about Dickens in relation to the balance between minor and major characters. For Praz, Dickens’s minor characters are an important exception to the usual balance of interest between major and minor characters; ‘the result is that the most interesting characters turn out to be those who contribute little

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<sup>134</sup> Higbie, p.66.

<sup>135</sup> Higbie, p.67.

<sup>136</sup> Higbie, p.92.

<sup>137</sup> Eigner, p.72 and p.91.

<sup>138</sup> Eigner, p.33.

or nothing to the development of the plot'.<sup>139</sup> It may be then, that in trying to analyse character in its position in narrative like novels many critics fall back on function. However, Praz is able to use Dickens's characters to prove that character is not inexorably tied to function. After listing a number of famous and infamous Dickens characters as outstanding even without considering plot, Praz comes to the conclusion, 'It means probably that Dickens was born to be a writer of 'sketches', of character'.<sup>140</sup> Without mentioning character, Praz is relating Dickens to the form even within his novel characters.

Further to taking character out of plot and function, Seymour Chatman writes in direct opposition to what he notes as the 'formalist' and 'structuralist' approach of latching onto character function. He insists that readers separate the two within reading, to:

preserve openness and treat characters as autonomous beings, not as mere plot functions. It [character theory] should argue that character is reconstructed by the audience from evidence announced or implicit in an original construction and communicated by the discourse...<sup>141</sup>

While so many theorists argue amongst themselves for theoretical 'correctness' and superiority, it is perhaps better to take into account numerous arguments and synthesise an 'understanding' of various interpretations of character within the framework of their creation. In other words, structural function should exist continuously with authorial intent, historical context, and even reader interpretation, relation, and enjoyment.

Despite that a number of critics, after looking at character within plot function, find that perhaps it is better to understand character outside of 'function' -

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<sup>139</sup> Mario Praz, *The Hero in Eclipse in Victorian Fiction*, ed. by Angus Davidson (London: Oxford University Press, 1956). p.163.

<sup>140</sup> Praz, p.163.

<sup>141</sup> Chatman, p.119.

especially when it comes to Dickens- some critics still seem stuck in this idea. W.J. Harvey argues that ‘it is ridiculous to isolate characters from a novel and discuss them as totally autonomous entities’.<sup>142</sup> Harvey is so insistent on character being tied to plot function that he calls them ‘merely useful cogs in the mechanism of the plot’.<sup>143</sup> Harvey then spends a lot of time going into detail analysing different definitions of plot functioning characters.<sup>144</sup>

I do not mean to be too insistent that separating character from plot or plot function is the only way of reading character, only that it is another way and can help analyse characters differently. For example, works on archetypal roles are an important, albeit inherently structural, interpretation of character. Famously, Northrop Frye discusses archetypes, hero narratives, and mythology in the context of literary criticism. Similarly, Vladimir Propp looks at analysing the folktale in scientific terms of distinction and classification. He opens his argument with an explanation behind his choice of scientific terms; ‘The word “morphology” means the study of forms. In botany, the term ‘morphology’ means the study of the component parts of a plant, of their relationship to each other and to the whole- in other words, the study of a plant’s structure.’<sup>145</sup> Vladimir Propp’s work on folktale archetypes also looks at character motivation as an aspect of their position within plot.<sup>146</sup> This reading does not necessarily insist on placing character within plot but can be read that way.

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<sup>142</sup> WJ Harvey, *Character and the Novel* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1965). p.31.

<sup>143</sup> Harvey, p. 56.

<sup>144</sup> Harvey discusses the roles of different characters who are neither ‘main’ nor ‘minor’. These ‘intermediate’ characters are defined solely by their functions. Among these characters are the ‘ficelle’ and the ‘card’. Harvey talks about the ficelle as the character who exists only to serve a function to the plot. The ‘card’ on the other hand is the characters who’s function is to be a ‘character’. See Harvey, pp.58-63 for more detail on the breakdown of ‘ficelle’ and ‘card’.

<sup>145</sup> Vladimir Propp, *Morphology of the Folktale*, ed. by Louis A Wagner and Laurence Scott (Austin: University of Texas, 1975). p.xxv.

<sup>146</sup> Propp, p.75.



When Harvey asserts that ‘the novel itself is nothing but a complicated structure of artificially formed contexts parallel to those with in which we experience real people’<sup>147</sup> he is pointing out that there is more to character than the restrictive world of the novel. While we might analyse characters within novels based on their functions or roles, if we draw a parallel to real life, characters must be more than that; since we cannot know our roles in real life like we would a novel, we cannot draw a direct parallel between both readings. Thus, character can be read for itself like people are read. The very distinctions of minor versus major and the problems such a binary can cause can directly result in the same binary being destroyed. For this problem, we need to look directly at two studies focused on the binary of major and minor, David Galef’s *The Supporting Cast* and Alex Woloch’s *The One vs. the Many*.

There are many ways critics have sought distinctions between characters (e.g. major versus minor) but the idea that character differentiation occurs through interest and importance is the basis of each division. Theorists have had many differing opinions to the number of divisions to take between characters. For example, Alex Woloch claims in his book *The One vs. The Many*, that there is one protagonist in a story and all others are subordinate characters whose function is to help or hinder the journey of the protagonist. On the other hand, W. J. Harvey asserts that there are three categories that most characters can be grouped into; these delineations are protagonist, intermediate characters, and background characters.

Vladimir Propp breaks down these distinctions even further, listing several ‘spheres of action’ which define different character roles including, villain, donor, helper, princess, father, dispatcher, hero, and false hero. Both styles of definition,

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<sup>147</sup> Harvey, p. 31.

delineation and classification, have their own flaws. In his take on folktales, Propp asserts, ‘functions must be defined independently of the characters who are supposed to fulfil them.’<sup>148</sup> While his research on morphology supersedes his emphasis on function, Propp nevertheless recognises that in defining the component parts of traditional folktales, he must necessarily involve function with character role. Thus, his ‘spheres of action’ are defined by the characters that represent them. Propp tries to validate his argument on function and character by inserting a third option relating to and connecting both terms, motivations. Thus, Propp asserts that his characters act on motivations which ultimately create functions but these motivations are, ‘less precise and definite than functions’.<sup>149</sup> While Harvey and Propp face having to define and categorise every character according to their diverse functions and characteristics, Woloch faces the opposite problem of vast generalisation.

But even within these attempts at classification, critics acknowledge the essential interplay of character: ‘The human context, then, is primarily a web of relationships; the characters do not develop along single and linear roads of destiny but are, so to speak, human cross-roads.’<sup>150</sup> This idea of a ‘web’ of character relations leads us closer to understanding how characters relate to one another but it still does not speak to the attempts at hierarchical classification of character. Woloch claims that without a central or dominant main character, any narrative will devolve into chaos; ‘the narrative threats of both “endless” individual and the measureless crowd (which are really interdependent) emerge out of the temporary lack of a central, orienting narrative figure.’<sup>151</sup> However, what Galef points out is the question of focus;

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<sup>148</sup> Propp, p.66.

<sup>149</sup> Propp, p.75.

<sup>150</sup> Harvey, p.69.

<sup>151</sup> Alex Woloch, *The One vs.the Many* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003).p.5.

what makes a minor character minor if they are more interesting or memorable than the 'main' character? Galef writes, 'One could go further and argue that any minor or flat character so highlighted is actually a major character- and this opens up another definitional, even descriptive, problem'.<sup>152</sup> In fact, Galef culminates with a very important question, while contemplating characters within plot; 'What is a major character, after all, but a minor figure with sufficient duration to allow some focus?'<sup>153</sup>

Another position on the importance of so-called 'minor' characters actually being essential and thus, not minor at all, is the idea that background characters, seemingly minor to plot, are in fact needed to create the 'world' of the novel in which the story is set. Percy Lubbock writes it more eloquently:

[minor characters] all contribute out of their overflow of energy to the force of a drama- a drama in which they may take no more specific part, but which depends on them for the furnishing of an appropriate scene, a favouring background, a world attuned.<sup>154</sup>

David Galef agrees, citing science fiction as the genre in which this contribution is most apparent, '[these novels] depend heavily on background figures to explain the worlds they depict'.<sup>155</sup> However, the 'world' of the Victorian novel, especially when read by a modern viewer, can be as alien as a world in a science fiction novel and thus, the world the characters create and support is as dependant on said characters as genre writing. This is no more obvious than the world Dickens's characters create; the word 'Dickensian' is often used to reference a 'world' or feature similar to those created by Dickens's characters. Both George Orwell and GK Chesterton noted the cohesion amongst Dickens's works. Chesterton wrote, 'Dickens's work is not to be

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<sup>152</sup> Galef, p. 11.

<sup>153</sup> Galef, p.169.

<sup>154</sup> Percy Lubbock, *The Craft of Fiction*, ed. by Jonathan Cape (London: Bradford & Dickins, 1957). p.215.

<sup>155</sup> Galef, p.13.

reckoned in novels at all. Dickens's work is to be reckoned always by characters, sometimes by groups, oftener by episodes, but never by novels'.<sup>156</sup> Nearly forty years later, Orwell agreed; 'It is not so much a series of books, it is more like a world.'<sup>157</sup>

For Alex Woloch, the Dickensian cast of minor characters is also a unique, what he calls, 'character-system'. In *The One vs. the Many*, Dickens is one of the authors in which Woloch decides to spend special consideration. In the larger scale, the vast dramatis personae of the Dickensian oeuvre could be read as an allegory of London itself, a crowded populace filled with eccentrics; or, as Woloch puts it, 'The narrator's compression of an extensive number of characters into the most idiosyncratic is also motivated by the actual compression of many people [...] into London itself, and its houses, streets, and vehicles'.<sup>158</sup> However, labelling characters as simply allegorical is removing agency from their being. This, in essence, is the debate between many over what defines major and minor characters, agency.

Are minor characters considered minor because of their lack of agency within the narrative? Or are minor characters minor because they have not been allowed sufficient time or space in the narrative to become fully rounded? Or, are minor characters minor because it is in their very nature to be so? These are all questions critics consider. In the simplest explanation, a minor character is set apart from the main character, or the protagonist, because of the multiplicity of 'minors' that does not exist for the protagonist.<sup>159</sup> As Woloch points out, the conflict between major and minor is, as his title suggests, a case of the one versus the many. However, even given their sheer number- especially in any one Dickens novel- minor characters continue to interest scholars.

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<sup>156</sup> GK Chesterton, 'The Pickwick Papers', in *The Dickens Critics*, ed. by George H. Ford and Lauriat Lane, Jr. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1906; 1966), pp. 109-21. P.110.

<sup>157</sup> George Orwell, 'Charles Dickens', in *The Dickens Critics*, ed. by George H. Ford and Lauriat Lane, Jr. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1940; 1966), pp. 157-71. P.159.

<sup>158</sup> Woloch, p.190.

<sup>159</sup> Woloch, p.7.

Woloch suggests two propositions to why critics seem so intrigued by minor characters. Woloch argues that ‘If minor characters were literally minor in the normative sense of the word [...] the term itself would never have been formulated or deployed so often in literary criticism and evaluation’.<sup>160</sup> Is our fascination with minor characters simply because there are more of them to study, because they are minor and thus more elusive, or because they ‘stands [sic] out because the writer has done a lot with a little’?<sup>161</sup> We are interested in minor characters because they are interesting. This does not necessarily hold against critical inquiry but what Woloch calls ‘the strange resonance of minor characters’, especially Dickens’s characters, continues to intrigue readers and critics alike because despite being given less narrative space, despite having no agency within the protagonist’s plot (sometimes), Dickens’s minor characters are ‘at the heart of Dickens’s fictional achievement’.<sup>162</sup>

However, we come again to the debate of whether minor characters are minor because of their agency within the protagonist’s plot or because of their inherent minor-ness? Many critics define minor characters by their eccentricity, their grotesqueness, or their ‘typification’. For these critics, Dickens’s minor characters are the example of what a minor character is because of their eccentricities. Woloch argues that minor characters can be categorised as both plot and character focused. Woloch calls the two categories of minor characters the ‘worker’ and the ‘eccentric’; ‘the *worker* [sic] and the *eccentric* [sic], the flat character who is reduced to a single functional use within the narrative, and the fragmentary character who plays a disruptive, oppositional role within the plot’.<sup>163</sup> Thus, where we saw some critics calling all minor characters flat or not fully rounded, and that would make them

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<sup>160</sup> Woloch, p.37.

<sup>161</sup> Woloch, p.37.

<sup>162</sup> Woloch, pp.40 and 126.

<sup>163</sup> Woloch, p.25.

minor, for Woloch not all minor characters are flat or types. Woloch's balance between plot minors and character minors is proof that the reasons minor characters are minor can be as varied as the number of minor characters.

For Dickens, minor characters are both plot and character minors and in fact, surpass their protagonists in both interest and agency. For example, even Woloch acknowledges that *GE*, 'features a weak protagonist, overwhelmed on all sides by various kinds of minor characters' and in *OT*, 'Oliver's 'survival' is almost continually reactive, responding to plot twists that he rarely generates'.<sup>164</sup> The minor characters in *GE* are more interesting than the weak Pip, and Oliver, despite being the protagonist, is not an active agent in his own plot.

Discussions around character almost always refer in some part to Dickens's characters. I have already postulated that this may be because his characters surpass the novels. Higbie references critics' interest in Dickens's characters; 'discussions of character that concentrate on form and theme fail to capture what really makes characters effective. This is probably the main reason that critics usually do not deal adequately with characterisation like Dickens's'.<sup>165</sup> When talking about minor characters, critics often cannot agree on who in Dickens is a minor character. For some, everyone who is not a protagonist, is a minor character. For others, there are varying levels of classification. I would like to propose that, especially when it comes to discussions about Dickens's characters, a dichotomy or even trichotomy is not an effective tool. I would like to propose that if we consider characterisation as a spectrum and not as a binary between major and minor, then our understanding of character and the uses of characters in literature will be better-rounded and could help us see how character is such an integral part of literature.

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<sup>164</sup> Woloch, pp. 35 and 132.

<sup>165</sup> Higbie, p.12.

The focus of Dickens critics has altered with every generation (and sometimes within generations.) Lionel Trilling wrote in 1953;

With a body of works as large and as enduring as that of Dickens, taste and opinion will never be done. They will shift and veer as they have shifted and veered with the canon of Shakespeare, and each generation will have its special favorites [sic] and make its surprised discoveries.<sup>166</sup>

In fact, some critics based their analyses on negating previous critics. For example, as we saw many critics at the turn of the century believed Dickens's characters to be flawed because they were mainly written as external beings without psychological depth. This was the belief of Henry James and his followers. However, in 1939, Edmund Wilson wrote of doubling in Dickens's characters from the belief that this doubling was based on psychological duality.

Rex Warner wrote in 1947, 'Dickens, having been born, unluckily for himself, before either Freud or Proust, was of necessity debarred from the creation of anything that can rightly be called a character'.<sup>167</sup> Despite this assumption that Dickens's character could not have psychological depth because Freud hadn't yet published, Edmund Wilson claims the fourth stage of Dickens's career as the psychological.<sup>168</sup> Wilson's analysis of dualism in Dickens works both on the exterior and interior of character. Externally, characters have physical doubles, based sometimes on melodrama, which counterbalance each other's actions. Wilson writes, 'There has always to be a good and a bad of everything: each of the books had its counterbalancing values, and pairs of characters sometimes counterbalance each other from the cast of different books'.<sup>169</sup> For example, Wilson writes of the 'good

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<sup>166</sup> Lionel Trilling, 'Little Dorrit', in *The Dickens Critics*, ed. by George H. Ford and Lauriat Lane, Jr. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1953; 1966), pp. 279-94. P.279.

<sup>167</sup> Rex Warner, 'On Reading Dickens', in *The Dickens Critics*, ed. by George H. Ford and Lauriat Lane, Jr. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1947; 1966), pp. 181-90. P.187.

<sup>168</sup> Wilson, p.101.

<sup>169</sup> Wilson, p.64.

Jew' of Riah in *OMF* balancing the 'bad Jew' of Fagin in *OT*. Juliet John agrees when writing about the 'twinned' or 'doubled' villains; but instead of using vague terms of 'good' and 'bad', John specifies character traits that can be doubled such as the passionate versus the passionless villain.<sup>170</sup> This doubling can also occur in the same character, hinting at deeper psychological depths in Dickens than Henry James and Rex Warner allow. Wilson writes of the complexity in Dickens when he writes 'one of his noxious characters [to] become wholesome, one of his clowns [to] turn into a serious person'.<sup>171</sup> The examples Wilson gives for these changes in character are Mr Dombey and Scrooge. John Kucich takes the idea of doubling further to multiple parallel characters, 'Another [analyses] is to project a single character's conflicting psychic impulses outward across a series of parallel characters'.<sup>172</sup>

Ways of reading Dickens have varied as much as literary theory itself has. Most critics agree, whatever their aesthetic judgment of critical analysis of Dickens, that his characters stand out in his works. Edwin Muir likened Dickens's works to a ballet where characters do not need to change and develop, as in drama, but are able to 'merely move in space'.<sup>173</sup> Many critics agree that whether or not characters develop or change the world around them, they are still often more prominent or lasting than Dickens's plots. V. S. Pritchett wrote, 'Dickens's comedy is the comedy of people who *are* something, rather than the comedy of people who *do* something'.<sup>174</sup> At a time when many were criticising Dickens, G. K. Chesterton defended Dickens's characters, 'the units of Dickens, the primary elements, are not the stories, but the

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<sup>170</sup> Juliet John, *Dickens's Villains: Melodrama, Character, Popular Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001). P.9.

<sup>171</sup> Wilson, pp.61-62.

<sup>172</sup> John Kucich, 'Dickens', in *The Columbia History of the British Novel*, ed. by John Richetti (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), pp. 381-405. P.401.

<sup>173</sup> Ford, p.361.

<sup>174</sup> V. S. Pritchett, 'The Comic World of Dickens', in *The Dickens Critics*, ed. by George H. Ford and Lauriat Lane, Jr. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1954; 1966), pp. 309-25.p.311.



characters who affect the stories- or, more often still, the characters who do not affect the stories'.<sup>175</sup>

## 2.4. Conclusion

While many critics were trying to understand or rationalise Dickens's characters, other writers were focused on publishing compendiums of Dickens's dramatis personae. These compendiums have not been restricted to Dickens's protagonists and heroes. Only two years after the death of Charles Dickens, a compendium of 'who's who' in Dickens's oeuvre was published in America. This *Dickens Dictionary* was to become only the first of other works which quickly followed in 1908 and 1924. Indeed, such works are still being compiled and published with the latest coming out in February of 2012 by John Sutherland.

One of the major problems facing the authors of these dictionaries is what to include. According to George Newlin, the author of *Everyone in Dickens*, there are over 13,143 names used in Dickens's works 'including 95 documented unused coinages'.<sup>176</sup> With these numbers, even the compiler has to make decisions on who is important enough to be included. Newlin's work, which has been broken into three volumes, is itself 2,568 pages long. Most other Dickens compendiums are less voluminous but their authors have made more deletions. Donald Hawes writes of his *Who's Who in Dickens*, 'I have tried to include everyone of interest and importance'.<sup>177</sup> As Hawes suggests, the inclusion of a character in a dictionary deems this character 'important enough' to be selected and highlighted from the myriad faces and names in Dickens's oeuvre. However, while the exhaustiveness of Newlin's

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<sup>175</sup> Chesterton, p.111.

<sup>176</sup> Donald Hawes, *Who's Who in Dickens* (London: Routledge, 1998).p.1.

<sup>177</sup> Hawes, p.1.

multivolume work is useful and important in its comprehensiveness, previous and subsequent dictionaries and encyclopaedias are nonetheless important for their very exclusiveness.

A copy of Pierce and Weller's *Dickens Dictionary* from 1900 (published less than twenty years after the first edition) notes in its appendices, along with its alphabetized index of characters, exclusion was due to interest:

Not a few names are omitted, as being quite unclassifiable; others, as belonging to persons, places, or things altogether insignificant; others again, because, if brought together at all, they could only be so under headings of very little interest or importance. Incomplete-designedly incomplete- as the list is, however, it is thought that the groupings it presents will be found to be both curious, and useful for references.<sup>178</sup>

It is this distinction of importance and interest versus unimportance and disinterest that sets up the creation of the character spectrum or continuum in opposition to the generally accepted dichotomy between major and minor. Even within the academic study of Dickens's characters, the practice of references becomes a question of exclusion versus inclusion. Let us look first at the self-professed be-all-end-all of Dickensian reference books, 'Newlin has created a reference work that supplants every other work that has attempted to be a *Dickens Encyclopaedia* or *Dickens Dictionary* or *Guide to Dickens*. I do not need the previous ones anymore. I will never need them again.'<sup>179</sup>

George Newlin's volume three is itself a series of indices created to classify Dickens's characters. Subtitled *Characteristics and Commentaries, Tables and Tabulations, A Taxonomy*, Volume three includes indices on surnames, given names, given names without surnames, male characters occupations and vocations, female

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<sup>178</sup> Gilbert A. Pierce, *The Dickens Dictionary*, ed. by William A. Wheeler (Cambridge: Riverside Press, 1900). p.547.

<sup>179</sup> George Newlin, *Everyone in Dickens: Plots, People and Publishing Particulars in the Completed Works 1833-1849* (Westport: Greenwood, 1995), I. p. X.

characters' occupations and vocations, relationships, historical characters, and biblical, mythological, musical, and literary references.<sup>180</sup> What is important to note from volume three is that it is almost census like construction. Characters have been reordered and classified as to their gender, occupation, and creation (similar to birth). Newlin begins the volume similar to the previous two, noting that importance and 'hierarchical significance' is highlighted within the exhaustive text with the use of capitalization and font size. His explanation of each differentiation reads like a map key. Thus, Newlin has approached the issue of Dickens's characters in the way a scientist or anthropologist would, creating signifiers and classifications in order to 'order' Dickens's *dramatis personae*.

Previous dictionaries or encyclopaedias of Dickens's oeuvre approach the works in a similar manner but their concentration on scientific classification decreases in relation to their volume. Newlin notes in his foreword, 'never before has his [Dickens] oeuvre (speeches excepted) been arranged in the strictest practicable chronological order.'<sup>181</sup> Fred Kaplan notes that previous compendiums were restricted by the medium used to compile and classify the works.<sup>182</sup> Newlin himself notes his reason for being so exhaustive, 'What might be utterly trivial in one context could be useful in another.'<sup>183</sup>

Newlin does not even stop his encyclopaedia with those characters that are given names. He observes in his collection of names in Dickens's oeuvre that there are a number of instances of characters not being given proper names, but instead given an identifier which recalls an action or position the character holds. This does not mean that the character is not significant or memorable. In fact, one only need

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<sup>180</sup> Newlin, I, p.iii.

<sup>181</sup> Newlin, I, p. xvii

<sup>182</sup> Newlin, I, p. ix.

<sup>183</sup> George Newlin, *Everyone in Dickens: Characteristics and Commentaries, Tables and Tabulations- A Taxonomy* (Westport: Greenwood, 1995), III., p. 347

look at the case of The Fat Boy in *PP* as evidence of this. Even though the character is given a proper name, Joe, he is known by his descriptive name and is frequently represented in memorabilia and images under his descriptive name. Unnamed characters fly in the face of the assumption that important characters have names.

In Newlin's encyclopaedia, he identifies 551 'figures who bear sobriquets or names of parody, of which a few overlap one of the other categories.'<sup>184</sup> Newlin agrees, unlike many other Dickens compilations, that these unnamed characters are still important, 'Charles Dickens's unnamed characters often contribute greatly to the working out of his plots and the atmosphere he creates.'<sup>185</sup> Newlin's index on generic characters in Dickens runs from pages 348 to 461, alphabetizing and referencing characters such as 'gamekeeper', 'shop employee', 'waiter', and 'gentleman'. While these titles are very vague in themselves, Newlin also notes in which works these characters appear and in some instances, which chapter. Just in noting the gamekeeper of Chesney Wold appears in Chapter Eighteen of *BH*, Newlin has immediately distinguished this gamekeeper from any other such named minor character who may appear in any other of Dickens's works. His denomination of 'gamekeeper of Chesney Wold' has removed him from the anonymous faces of the crowd.

The continued interest and fascination with Dickens's characters, whether in literary theory or dictionaries, proves that it is these characters which have persisted in cultural memory more than stories, plots, or the real people from which the characters are based. To Dickens as well, his characters were a primary focus of his writing and his understanding of his own authorship. In this next chapter, I will return to Dickens for his own thoughts.

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<sup>184</sup> Newlin, I, p. xx

<sup>185</sup>Newlin, iii, p.347.

### 3. Dickens the Inimitable?



**Figure 13: *The Great Magician*, by Joseph Clayton Clarke (Kyd) (1887). Image© Charles Dickens Museum**

In the above drawing, Figure 13, Joseph Clayton Clarke, otherwise known as 'Kyd', has presented Dickens, not at his desk holding a pen like so many other portraits and photographs of Dickens, but as a magician, conjuring his characters in the steam rising from his magical caldron. There is conflicting imagery in the illustration however; Dickens holds a quill pen as his 'wand' and there are inkwells on the table behind Dickens but Dickens is holding the pen in an unnatural way for

writing. Kyd is still wanting to highlight that Dickens was an author by using the authorial paraphernalia but the way in which Dickens is holding the pen suggests that it is more than a writing implement, that it too is magical and can conjure without putting nib to paper. Dickens is also holding a rolled piece of paper, perhaps his writing. Again, even though the manuscript page is present, Dickens is not in the act of writing on it nor are the characters themselves anywhere near the paper or the books that litter the floor.

To suggest that his genius was purely magical was perhaps not what Kyd wished as he made sure to include the implements of Dickens's writing career even if those same implements are impotent. Even Kyd's title 'The Great Magician' is followed by a reminder of the pen, 'The Pen is Mightier than the Sword.' This image was perhaps inspired by a tribute to Dickens in the London *Tomahawk* from 25<sup>th</sup> of June 1870; 'And he has gone! This great magician of the pen has gone. Writing to the last, good, noble words, fighting to the last against Evil and Sham. He has gone for ever, leaving us to mourn for him'.<sup>186</sup> Another obituary from the time reads, 'His wand has fallen from his hand'.<sup>187</sup>

In Kyd's illustration of Dickens the magician, Dickens is actively conjuring characters instead of watching as they enact scenes around him. In Figure 13, the characters Dickens is invoking are portraits, not situated enacting scenes from their novels as in the R.W. Buss painting *Dickens's Dream*, which we saw in the first chapter. Furthermore, Kyd's characters are of his own portraiture now famous in their own right after being printed on numerous collectible postcards, Christmas cards, coloured lithographs, and cigarette cards in the early twentieth century. Buss

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<sup>186</sup> 'Charles Dickens', *The Tomahawk*, 164 (1870) <catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/000682245> [accessed 8 November 2015] pp.245-246. p.246.

<sup>187</sup> William Glyde Wilkins, *Dickens in Cartoon and Caricature*, ed. by B.W. Matz (Norwood and Boston: Plimpton Press, 1924). p.176.

instead took his inspiration of character from the original illustrations in Dickens's novels. Thus, the characters which Dickens is conjuring in the Kyd illustration have already been removed from his control, both by the death of Dickens and by the characters' altered depiction.

The positioning of Dickens in the first image is quite different to similar images of Dickens like some of the ones I looked at in the first chapter. Dickens is actively 'creating' his characters here whereas many similar images have Dickens merely thinking about, dreaming about, or simply surrounded by (and not interacting with) his characters. Other images of Dickens, like the photograph of Figure 14, show Dickens writing but do not include his characters.

Aside from the photographs of Dickens writing or reading or standing next to his desk which are illustrative of the nature of Dickens's work in themselves, the question of how Dickens related to his characters is the crux of this chapter. How did Dickens see his own creations? How, if at all, did Dickens interact with his characters? What was the nature of Dickens's work?



**Figure 14: Photograph of Dickens in Photograph Album belonging to Katie Perugini (nee Dickens). Image© Charles Dickens Museum**

Rather than present an image like Figure 14 of Dickens sitting at a desk and writing, I would like to propose that Dickens's relationship with his 'creations' was more complex than that of author and creation. The work 'creation' denotes a sort of divine inspiration and reducing the creation to a 'thing'. Instead, Dickens's writing was much more work and his relationship to his character was much more of a father to his children.

In an obituary to Dickens after his death in 1870, *The Hornet* of London published this review of Dickens's writing:

[list of characters] all live and breathe, and the poorest kind can number them amongst his acquaintances. Pickwick is no mere thought in ink on paper [...] He is flesh and blood, and we laugh with him, sympathise with him, philosophise with him, as though we met his beaming face every morning at our door. [...] a glorious company of life and poetry- Dickens's priceless legacy to the world.<sup>188</sup>

At once, this obituary is exclaiming the physical realness of Dickens's characters and, at the same time, tying them to Dickens by calling them 'his legacy' as though they were property left in Dickens's will.

This dual understanding of Dickens's characters is an understanding shared by Dickens himself. Whether his characters were his creations under his authorship or independent beings capable of living external to him was a fundamental aspect of Dickens's 'creative genius'.

In a letter to C.C. Felton in 1843, Dickens wrote, 'is it not a strange thing if writers of fiction never dream of their own creations: recollecting I suppose, even in their dreams, that they have no real existence? *I* never dreamed of any of my own characters'.<sup>189</sup> James T. Fields also remembers Dickens speaking of his dreams and his characters, '[dreaming of characters] "It would," he went on to say, "be like a

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<sup>188</sup> Quoted from *The Hornet* of 15<sup>th</sup> June, 1870 in Wilkins, p.173.

<sup>189</sup> *Letters*, Vol.3, p.550.



man's dreaming of meeting himself, which is clearly an impossibility. Things exterior to one's self must always be the basis of dreams.”<sup>190</sup> In these two quotations, Dickens is claiming never to dream of his characters because they are a part of himself and independently real. However, as we will come to see, Dickens himself did not live by this view of his characters. Indeed, many times he spoke of seeing his characters, speaking to them, and of them speaking to him.<sup>191</sup>

In this chapter I will consider both how Dickens interacted with his characters and how he wrote them in order to try to reconcile the conflicting idea of literary characters as imaginary creations as well as real beings that could live outside of their texts. Was the tendency of Dickens's characters to 'take over' the novel and 'upset' and 'destroy' it, like insurrectionists in the streets or lunatics taking over the asylum' a direct result of Dickens's own position on authorship?<sup>192</sup>

Whilst Dickens spoke of 'genius', the day to day relationship he had with his own process was anything but divine inspiration. Therefore, instead of a magic wizard, conjuring fairy tales Dickens was much more of a father to his characters. Dickens was at once an inescapable part of their birth, and 'genetics' yet an independent entity, unable to entirely control them.

If we compare the idea presented in Figure 13, that of Dickens as a 'magician', conjuring his characters from a cauldron of his imagination, with the idea of the dreaming Dickens, imagining his character in prophetic dreams and waking to scribble them onto paper as fast as memory can allow, there is little difference in the assumption that in writing, Dickens is connecting to a mystical act of creation rather

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<sup>190</sup> *Dickens: Interviews and Recollections Vol.2*, ed. by Philip Collins (London: Macmillan, 1981), II., p.311-312.

<sup>191</sup> I will examine many of these instances later in this chapter. One such example is in a letter he wrote to W.J. Broderip in 1852 while writing *BH*, 'I write briefly, being surrounded at this moment (in the spirit) with no end of brickmakers' babies and forms of phantoms all calling out of the gloom, 'Take me next, 'Look at me, 'It's my [turn]'. (*Letters*, Supplement. 8, p.224).

<sup>192</sup> Bowen, p.187.

than any process of work or active thinking. John Bowen writes of the narrators in Dickens's novels, that:

Dickens's narrators encourage the reader to see the whole business of creating fictions and fictional characters as a matter of conjuring and living with ghosts, of believing-and-not-believing in the existence of Sam Weller, Sim Tappertit, Mrs Gamp, and their imaginary friends.<sup>193</sup>

While the Kyd and Buss portraits were done after Dickens's death and thus, in part, stand as a memorial to Dickens and his work, they both also make some assumptions about Dickens writing.

Like the conflict in the Kyd portrait between author and conjurer, Litvack notes the conflicting ideas of 'activity and passivity' in *Dickens' Dream*, 'Dickens is in the library at Gad's Hill, but not writing; indeed the characters span the whole of his novelistic career, extending from *PP* to *MED*, thus suggesting that the business of writing has been completed.'<sup>194</sup> While the characters surrounding Dickens include characters throughout his career, Dickens is still sitting in his study as though able to still write. Since Dickens passed away before completing *MED*, to many of his readers Dickens will be forever suspended within the act of writing his final novel. But for Malcolm Andrews, *Dickens' Dream* implies not that Dickens's writing is finished, but that the act of writing itself is passive: 'the painting suggests a process of creation akin to spontaneous generation. [...] The author [is] a passive host, indicated by his chair being pushed some way back from his desk'.<sup>195</sup>

This passivity is also present in some similar images. In Figure 15, Dickens again sits in a chair, surrounded by his characters. In this image Dickens does have his eyes closed as if sleeping but again his characters are not present as an act of dreaming. Instead, his characters mingle in the smoke rising from Dickens's still lit

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<sup>193</sup> Bowen, pp.5-6.

<sup>194</sup> Litvack, p.7.

<sup>195</sup> Litvack, p.28.

cigar. This image appeared just after Dickens's death in 1870 and interestingly the representation of Dickens himself does have an eerie quality as if the viewer is unsure if Dickens is asleep or painfully conscious or unconscious since his face is almost grimaced and his hand still clutches the arm of the chair. It is as if Dickens is in a swoon, much like the stroke he experienced before passing away; but the still lit cigar suggests Dickens's own 'light' has not yet gone out.



**Figure 15: *Will o' the Wisp*, by Unknown (Saturday, 25 June, 1870). Image ©Charles Dickens Museum**

Eerier still, is the title heading the image 'Will-O'-The-Wisp' which refers to the Latin term *Ignis fatuus* or 'foolish fire'. The 'fire' is actually an ecological

phenomenon but the phrase came to mean ‘some scheme that is utterly impracticable’.<sup>196</sup> It is interesting that the artist should choose this term as the title of an image meant to celebrate Dickens and his creative power. The image itself was accompanied by a poem titled ‘Will o’ the wisp’ which was about the funeral and burial of Dickens. Dickens himself, however, is never named in the poem. The last stanza reads:

Looking down upon the Burial  
Of a King, who now was gathered  
To a company of Monarchs,  
In the silence of the Transept.<sup>197</sup>

Interestingly, the poem itself speaks of Dickens as a literary king, in burial with real Kings, perhaps referring to Dickens’s burial alongside the tombs of England’s own Kings in Westminster Abbey. Juxtaposing the burial poem alongside the image of a prostrate Dickens contradicts the idea of Dickens asleep yet alive, in the image alone. While both the image and poem are celebratory, the addition of the title seems to question Dickens’s genius as ‘impracticable’. The ethereal quality of Dickens’s characters, drifting in the real, yet intangible and ephemeral cigar smoke, again reflect the problematic balance of Dickens’s ‘genius’ and his ‘work’.

These images show that the reading public and artists were intrigued by the nature of Dickens’s authorship. In this chapter I will use Dickens’s letters to others, his manuscripts, his book of memoranda and working notes, and others’ memories of Dickens working to try to understand Dickens’s own understanding of his characters. Even though Dickens claimed to Felton that his characters had ‘no real existence’ and this is why he could not dream of them, Dickens himself often contradicts this idea

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<sup>196</sup> ‘Ignis Fatuus’, in *Brewer’s Dictionary of Phrase & Fable*, ed. by John Ayto, 17th edn (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2005), p. 706.

<sup>197</sup> ‘Will o’ the Wisp’, in *Dickens in Cartoon and Caricature*, ed. by B W Matz and William Glyde Wilkins (Boston and Norwood: Plimpton Press, 1924), pp. 176-84.

by speaking of and talking to his characters as though they are real. I would like to argue that Dickens's writing of character was akin to childbirth and that his characters' relationship to Dickens was like that of children; in other words, though Dickens 'created' his characters, they quickly became as independent as real children. His characters, though inexorably tied to Dickens were also outside of his control and went on to 'live' their own 'lives' beyond Dickens's own life and his own will.

This is certainly not the first time that writing was likened to childbirth and authorship to parenthood:

[George] Eliot spoke of the labour of producing her books as a form of parturition, and of them existing as independent lives once produced. She once told her correspondent that her experience of finishing a novel was not exultant or triumphant. "What comes after is rather the sense that the work has been produced within one, like offspring, developing and growing by some force of which one's own life has only served as a vehicle, and that what is left of oneself is only a poor husk."<sup>198</sup>

The metaphor is even more apt considering the nature of Dickens's serial publishing. The nature of nineteenth-century serial publication meant that Dickens was able to receive reviews and feedback from readers, friends, and critics before he had finished a story. In some instances Dickens was able to adapt his characters or stories according to the feedback he was receiving. In one case in particular, Dickens altered the planned trajectory of a character in order to appease a reader; this was the case of Miss Mowcher, a minor character in *DC*. Thus, as his authored 'children' were maturing, he was able to influence their trajectory. However, the interaction with his readers meant that Dickens's 'plans' for characters often changed. In fact, Dickens's works may have been more in his control had they been published first as completed novels. Edgar Allan Poe noted the loss of editorial control for a periodical novelist, 'When his work is done, he never fails to observe a thousand defects which he might

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<sup>198</sup> Mead, p.104.

have remedied, and a thousand alterations, in regard to the book as a whole, which might be made to its manifest improvement'.<sup>199</sup>

Dickens did not always listen to his critics and readers when they wished him to change something in his stories or characters. For instance, Dickens insisted on his keeping to his plan for Little Nell, despite the public outcry that he not let her die. Dickens wrote to Chapman & Hall in 1840 while writing *OCS*, 'I am inundated with imploring letters recommending poor little Nell to mercy. --Six yesterday, and four today (it's not 12 o'clock yet) already!'<sup>200</sup> Doris Alexander writes of other writers treating Dickens's characters as real, 'writers like Bulwer Lytton, Walter Savage Landor, and Francis Jeffrey pleaded with him and sometimes even convinced him to alter the fate of a character as if it were a beloved friend magically in his power'.<sup>201</sup>

Again, Dickens's characters developed further beyond their first publications during Dickens's public reading tours. The readings were an important opportunity for Dickens to physically illustrate how he embodied his characters (or even how they embodied him). However, the nature of Dickens's characters living within the readings was not confined to Dickens's performances on stage in front of audiences. What occurred as Dickens was drafting and rehearsing his readings was just as important as what was finally presented on stage.

I have tried to make the focus of the analysis in this chapter as primarily sourced as possible. While there have been books and article written about Dickens writing, and I will consider some of them, I have chosen to base my analysis on as much of Dickens's own words as possible.<sup>202</sup> I will also consider the words of those who knew and met Dickens in person, sourced from memoirs and recollections.<sup>203</sup>

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<sup>199</sup> Poe, p.20.

<sup>200</sup> *Letters*, Vol.2.p.153.

<sup>201</sup> Alexander, p.1.

<sup>202</sup> I will be sourcing Dickens's words from his collected letters in 12 Volumes, published by Oxford University Publishing and the supplements published subsequently in *The Dickensian*. Also, I will be

But this tack has its own challenges. The first printed collection of Dickens's letters was published in 1880 and was collected and arranged by Dickens's daughter, Mamie, and Georgina Hogarth. With this and subsequent publications of Dickens's letters by his friends and family, the public came to know a little more about Dickens's own thoughts about his writing. However, given that the collections were highly selective and edited for personal content, these publications were not entirely objective. Likewise, any inclusion of Dickens's letters, memoranda, or working notes in Forster's writings cannot be taken entirely at face value. After nearly forty years and twelve volumes, the final volume of *The Pilgrim Letters of Charles Dickens* was finally published, bringing together fifty years of Dickens's life in letters for scholars to pore over for any hints of the man and the writer.

It was not until the 1940s that Dickens's *Book of Memoranda* was acquired by the New York Public Library in its Berg Collection. Not until 1987 were Dickens's working notes published by the University of Chicago Press and thus made widely available to scholars; since the majority of the working notes were held at time of publication by three institutions, their availability before publication in facsimile in the 80s was to selected academics only. Even today, not all of Dickens's manuscripts are available to view easily; only a few of them have been published in facsimile form or are digitally available.

Because of restrictions of access, or late publication, or editorial bias, it is only fairly recently that studies of Dickens's writings have been able to move beyond his published works into the personal or archival process of his writing. I hope, with this

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looking at Dickens's *Book of Memoranda*, *Working Notes for his Novels*, and the manuscripts of MC, BR, and DC which are all held at the National Art Library at the Victoria & Albert Museum in London.

<sup>203</sup> These include: *Dickens: Interviews and Recollections, V.1*, ed. by Philip Collins (London: Macmillan Press, 1981), I.; Mamie Dickens, *My Father as I Recall Him* (London: Middlesex: Roxburghe Press; Wildhern Press, 2009).; Sir Henry F Dickens, *Memories of My Father* (London: Camelot Press, 1928).; *Dickens: Interviews and Recollections Vol.2*, ed. by Philip Collins (London: Macmillan, 1981), II.; George Dolby, *Charles Dickens as I knew Him: The Story of the Reading Tours in Great Britain and America (1866-1870)* (London: T Fisher Unwin, 1887).

chapter, to contribute to this growing conversation. The manner in which manuscripts are looked at as ‘archival evidence’ of a sort is a growing conversation. In 2013, a collaborative book was published looking at literary archival studies titled *The Boundaries of the Literary Archive: Reclamation and Representation*. This study, edited by Carrie Smith and Lisa Stead contains articles on particular case studies of manuscripts and literary archives. As Stead writes in the introduction, ‘Telling the story of the “work” has become a stronger imperative in the wake of what Terry Crook describes as “the fundamental revolution affecting the very nature of society’s collective memory”’.<sup>204</sup>

By using Dickens’s manuscripts as archaeological evidence of Dickens’s writing process and comparing them to Dickens’s own words about writing and his characters, we can try to trace a ‘history’ of Dickens’s characters as they are created and understood.

### **3.1. Dickens’s style and relationship with his work**

One of the main dialogues when looking at the way in which Dickens wrote was whether he wrote from a creative impulse like the ‘magic’ illustrated by Kyd or whether writing was work, his career, something which did not always come naturally to Dickens. Of course, these ideas need not be mutually exclusive. Indeed, it is argued by Helen Small that the ‘trouble’<sup>205</sup> he had writing in the later half of his

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<sup>204</sup> Lisa Stead, ‘Introduction’, in *The Boundaries of the Literary Archive: Reclamation and Representation*, ed. by Carrie Smith and Lisa Stead (Farnham and Burlington: Ashgate, 2013), pp. 1–12. p.1.

<sup>205</sup> This is ‘trouble’ in the sense in the latter half of his career, Dickens was not publishing as frantically and copiously as he had in the first half of his career. For example, at the beginning of his career, Dickens was finishing *Pickwick Papers* at the same time as writing OT and then quickly began NN as well. In comparison, there were three years in between the publication of GE and OMF and five years between OMF and MED. A brief Dickens chronology can be consulted at: <http://dickens.ucsc.edu/resources/chronology.html>. Another source which confirms this difference in writing is John Butt’s and Kathleen Tillotson’s *Dickens at Work*, in which they say ‘As a young man he



career came from his own attempt to not appear too ‘Dickensian’. She writes in her analysis of *MED*, ‘it may be that we are seeing here the limited extent to which even Dickens himself, so late in his career, could resist (or wanted to resist) the force of his own signature’.<sup>206</sup> Thus, his prolific early publications may have affected his distanced later publications.

Percy Fitzgerald, a member of the Dickens Fellowship from its conception and once of the earliest Dickens academics, hypothesised that the difference between Dickens’s early and later characters and how they held the public’s interest was that his earlier characters were inspired by real people whereas the later ones came more from Dickens’s imagination; ‘In all good spirited story-telling I believe that “the note” of every character is taken from life. [...] Late in life our author found himself evolving characters from his imagination, which were not so true to nature as the old types’.<sup>207</sup> The difference between Dickens’s earlier works and his later works is a matter of curiosity.<sup>208</sup>

Edwin Eigner had his own hypothesis on the separation of Dickens’s early and later works in his research on *The Metaphysical Novel in England and America*. Eigner posits that Dickens’s novels and writing style changed after *MC* because of the intense interest readers developed for Mrs Gamp, a minor character, and that Dickens had to change the plot of the story because of sales. Eigner says, ‘especially the improvised Mrs. Gamp, developed in ways which contradict Dickens’s intended vision and render the preconceived plot faulty’<sup>209</sup> and that perhaps the reason

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had been a fluent writer, able to drive himself to work all day; and the surviving sheets of manuscript of his earliest novels suggest a hand racing to keep pace with the mind’s conceptions. [...] from *DS* onwards his manuscripts are characterized by frequent erasures and interlineations’. (John Butt and Kathleen Tillotson, *Dickens at Work* (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd, 1982). p.20.

<sup>206</sup> Helen Small, ‘Dispensing with Style’, in *Dickens’s Style*, ed. by Daniel Tyler (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp. 253-71.

<sup>207</sup> Fitzgerald, pp.155-156.

<sup>208</sup> Also what constitutes ‘early’ and ‘later’ is also up for debate.

<sup>209</sup> Eigner, p.36.

Dickens's characters are appropriated less after *MC* is that his characters had less life of their own like Mrs Gamp; 'Thus, after *MC*, Dickens seldom allowed his characters to develop so much life that they could refuse to follow his thematically oriented directions and thereby threaten to contradict the original version'.<sup>210</sup> After *MC*, Dickens still had one character especially that has enjoyed a rich afterlife, Wilkins Micawber. Since I have looked at Micawber briefly in the previous chapter, I will not go into much detail here but suffice to say, *MC* was a premature divide. Instead, by looking at Dickens's main novels after *DC*, there is a more precise definition between the widely appropriated early novels and the later novels. Harry Stone claims that after *MC*, Dickens had a 'new sense of mastery over the novel form'; that *DS* was different but it was in *DC* that Dickens truly found the form of the novel comfortable, 'the first novel in which design and execution (all in the post-Chuzzlewit mode) were completely under control'<sup>211</sup>

But while critics after Dickens have looked at his works as 'early' and 'later' styles, this kind of separation is rarely present in obituaries or articles written on Dickens's death. The immediate memory of and feeling of loss in the death of Dickens created an overall sense of the collective loss of his genius. Whether or not Dickens himself was aware of or intended a change in his writing styles, we may never know.

Did Dickens write because he happened to be successful, because he needed a steady income, or because he had a creative need to fulfil? Because Dickens has become so iconic, such a national icon or 'national treasure', there is a wish to view his relationship with writing as one of pure genius or spontaneous creativity; and if genius requires hard work, then is it genius? In 2011 for the Dickens Bicentenary the

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<sup>210</sup> Eigner, p.37.

<sup>211</sup> Charles Dickens, *Dickens' Working Notes for His Novels*, ed. by Harry Stone (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987). p.103.

following year, Michael Slater's book *The Intelligent Person's Guide to Dickens* was republished and retitled *The Genius of Dickens*; the new cover boldly stating 'The Ideas and Inspiration of Britain's Greatest Novelist'.<sup>212</sup>

Even a quick perusal of the collected letters of Dickens will reveal that he often wrote to friends of the hard work of writing. This does not diminish the value of his work. Rather, as I proposed earlier, likening his writing to childbirth might be the best way to reconcile the idea of creation with one of hard work without taking away from the affective value given to Dickens's works even two hundred years after his birth.

### **3.1.1. Writing his 'children'**

We have seen in the second chapter that in some cases, critics (like F. R. Leavis) were very critical of the nature of Dickens's writing, that he wrote too many caricatures or his characters were unrealistic. Trollope was critical of Dickens's characters as well, yet wrote of novels in general, 'I think that the highest merit which a novel can have consists in perfect delineation of character, rather than in plot, or humour, or pathos'.<sup>213</sup>

Anthony Trollope, by no means demure in his own estimation of himself and his talent, wrote much in *Autobiography* of his own practice of authorship and his views of what an author should be. Of the nature of work, Trollope writes, 'a man can always do the work for which his brain is fitted if he will give himself the habit of regarding his work as a normal condition of his life'.<sup>214</sup> First of all, dedication to the

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<sup>212</sup> Michael Slater, *The Genius of Dickens* (London: Duckworth Overlook, 2012).

<sup>213</sup> Anthony Trollope, *An Autobiography* (London: Penguin, 1993). p.152.

<sup>214</sup> Trollope, p.111.

job, in this case authorship, is essential. Trollope was famously fastidious in his writing; in *An Autobiography*, Trollope details his writing style:

When I have commenced a new book, I have always prepared a diary, divided into weeks, and carried it on for the period which I have allowed myself for the completion of the work. In this I have entered, day by day, the number of pages I have written, so that if at any time I have slipped into idleness for a day or two, the record of that idleness has been there, staring me in the face, demanding of me increased labour, so that the deficiency might be supplied. [...] I have allotted myself so many pages a week. [...] And as a page is an ambiguous term, my page has been made to contain 250 words; and as words, if not watched, will have a tendency to straggle, I have had every word counted as I went.<sup>215</sup>

Trollope's regulation in his writing was well known. His autobiography was published in 1883 and after laying out his writing structure, many thought to compare it with other writers' styles. Charley Dickens (Charles Dickens Junior) remembered his father working in comparison to Trollope;

Whether he [Dickens] could get on satisfactorily with the work in hand mattered nothing. He had no faith in the waiting-for-inspiration theory, nor did he fall into the opposite error of forcing himself willy-nilly to turn out so much manuscript every day, as was Mr. Anthony Trollope's plan, for instance. [...] but I have known from the expressive working of his face and from a certain intent look that I learnt to know well, that he had been, almost unconsciously, diligently thinking all round his subject; and that the next day's work would result in the comparatively easy production of a goodly number of those wonderful sheets full of blue lines, and erasures, and 'balloonings out'.<sup>216</sup>

From Charley's memories, we can see that neither did Dickens regulate himself down to the word count of his daily work nor did he wait until inspiration struck. This balance reflects the problem of representing Dickens's 'genius' that artists and critics would later have.

By personifying the 'words' he writes, Trollope is describing his organized writing style but is also acknowledging the independence of his 'creations'. Is it possible then, that Trollope's forced organisation of counting words and structuring

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<sup>215</sup> Trollope, pp.108-109.

<sup>216</sup> Collins, Vol.2, p.120.

the days in his diary is actually his attempt at regaining control over the creation of his imagination which would, if left to people the pages of his manuscript without said regulation, overcome his authorial control? When speaking directly of his characters after laying out the standardisation of his writing, Trollope admits to a loss of control:

I have been able to imbue myself thoroughly with the characters I have had in hand [...] crying at their grief, laughing at their absurdities, and thoroughly enjoying their joy. I have been impregnated with my own creations till it has been my only excitement to sit with the pen in my hand'.<sup>217</sup>

Charley's memory of Dickens writing continues with its own mention of Dickens's characters' reality:

he lived, I am sure, two lives, one with us and one with is fictitious people, and I am equally certain that the children of his brain were much more real to him at times that we were. I have, often and often, heard him complain that he could not get the people of his imagination to do what he wanted, and that they would insist on working out their histories in their way and not his.<sup>218</sup>

The continual description of characters as 'fictitious' and 'imaginary' and 'creations' consistently imply authorial control yet what both Charley and Trollope are saying is that in the midst of writing, the same control which initially helps create is also suddenly rendered inert and the characters themselves begin to take over both in excitement and in direction of the stories.

The contradiction between authorial control and imaginative inspiration is perhaps the very nature of authorship. Trollope's selection of the metaphor 'impregnation' is most telling. While it is not uncommon for author's works to be described as 'children' the relationship between parent and child sets out a similar conflict of control to author and character. Indeed, Charley's memory is quite poignant; for a real child of Dickens to liken Dickens's characters to children and to

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<sup>217</sup> Trollope, p.161.

<sup>218</sup> Collins, Vol.2, p.120.

say that Dickens's life with his physical children was parallel to his second 'life' with his literary 'children' shows how important Dickens's characters were.

Dickens himself writes of his characters as children. In a letter to Angela Burdett Coutts in 1850, Dickens wrote, 'I am at Broadstairs with my various children- real and imaginary'.<sup>219</sup> In Lynn Cain's Derridian reading of Dickens and his 'children', that of the 'logos' as child, the child is an investment or a revenue in the sense that work is put into it and a return is expected out.<sup>220</sup> In this sense, Dickens looking at his characters as his children is true, they are expected to contribute back to Dickens.

Excluding the commercial relationship Dickens had with his real children and his literary children, Dickens's own relationship with his characters as his children is also intriguing given Dickens's own gender identity as male. This becomes convoluted, as Cain points out, in *BH* when Dickens alternated between writing as the narrator (while technically genderless Cain aligns the narrator with Dickens and so proscribes the narrator as male) and writing as Esther Summerson, in female voice. Cain proposes that this gender doubling serves as a matricidal impulse. She writes,

By disguising himself as Esther, he symbolically becomes both father and mother of his literary child in an outburst of creative jouissance. By this means, he establishes his superiority over his female rivals [other writers] by proving that not only can he write as a woman just as well as they, but *he is still a male author*<sup>221</sup>, as the third-person narrative emphasizes.<sup>222</sup>

The competing voices of male and female present in *BH* as illustrative of the struggle for reproductive power in male and female writers, while important, does not lessen

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<sup>219</sup> *Letters*, Vol.6, p.154.

<sup>220</sup> Lynn Cain, *Dickens, Family, Authorship: Psychoanalytic Perspectives on Kinship and Creativity* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008). p.31.

<sup>221</sup> Emphasis in original source.

<sup>222</sup> Cain, p.131.

the labelling of Dickens as the sole birthing force behind his characters.<sup>223</sup> In fact, what Cain fails to address is the way in which Dickens consistently embodies other female characters outside of the novels. While Cain does reference Mrs Gamp briefly, she does not compare Dickens's female writing in *Esther* to his female writing in *Mrs Gamp*.

In the aborted piece, *Mrs Gamp with the Strolling Players*, Dickens not only revisits Mrs Gamp, but writes from her perspective and in her voice. Dickens appropriating the voice of another female, a Midwife nonetheless, could extend Cain's argument that Dickens was trying to prove some sort of surrogate reproductive ability. Dickens not only writes in Mrs Gamp's voice for the prose piece but can be seen to mimic her dialect and voice numerous times in letters. In a letter to Marion Ely, Dickens writes, 'Mrs. Harris says, only last evening, as she never see a hand which giv her sech pleasure as yourn; not only on account of its bein sech a beautiful hand in itself, but because of its bein so familiar in the hold times as is gone and past for hevermore amen'.<sup>224</sup> Dickens is writing as Gamp quoting Mrs Harris.

But this psychoanalytic reading of Dickens's relationship with his work does not fully address the physical reality of the same relationships. While Dickens makes the distinction between 'real' and 'imaginary' children in his letter, there are many cases where Dickens seems to contradict this distinction and seems to write about his literary children as if they are as tangible as his biological children and almost interchangeable.

The idea that his written characters were like children was so profound that at times Dickens himself is struck with the emotion of the relationship. In a letter in 1851, Dickens writes that he does not wish to edit a certain part because the editing

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<sup>223</sup> Cain's book can be referred to for more psychoanalytic perspectives on Dickens's writing and family dynamics.

<sup>224</sup> *Letters*, Supplement.5, p.141.

would be tantamount to surgery and that is too damaging to consider: 'I should have offered to alter it myself to the best of my power; but, on second thoughts, I have feared that my mode of treating it would be too alarmingly surgical to be borne by any mortal parent of a pen-ink-and-paper Child'.<sup>225</sup>

Indeed, Dickens is so affected by his paternal relationship to his characters that he often comments on his emotions when certain characters die as if he had no control over their fates. To Daniel Maclise, Dickens writes about the death of Little Nell, 'If you knew what I have been suffering in the death of that child!' and does not reference Nell herself; out of context the letter might seem to be speaking of a real child.<sup>226</sup>

Mamie Dickens remembers her father's emotion about writing Little Nell's death. For Mamie, Dickens's emotion in writing Nell is the perfect example of Dickens's deep emotional bond with all of his characters. She writes in *My Father as I Recall Him*,

that he had lived with his creations, that their joys and sorrows were his joys and sorrows, that at times his anguish, both of body and spirit, was poignant and heart-breaking, I know. His interest in and love for his characters were intense as his nature, and is shown nowhere more strongly than in his sufferings during his portrayal of the short life of 'Little Nell,' like a father he mourned for his little girl- the child of his brain<sup>227</sup>

Dickens is seen as a father mourning for his child as if he had no control over her fate; yet Dickens, as the author of Nell could have controlled her death.

The conflict between Dickens's real emotions for 'imaginary' beings becomes even more problematic with the death of his daughter Dora when she was less than a year old. This relationship is surely one of the most unsettling of Dickens's relationships with his characters. Dora Annie Dickens (named after Dora Spenlow

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<sup>225</sup> *Letters*, Vol.6, p.563.

<sup>226</sup> *Letters*, Vol.7, p.823.

<sup>227</sup> Mamie Dickens, p.30.



and Annie Strong, both characters in *DC*) was born in August of 1850. Dora Spenlow, the character, first appears in Chapter Twenty-Six which was published in the middle of the ninth number in January 1850.

In tracing Dickens's characters with their originals, there are a few links to which Dickens himself alludes. One of these is Dora Spenlow and it is of Dora that Dickens writes to Maria Beadnell. In a letter from 1855, Dickens writes:

I fancy,- though you may not have thought in the old time how manfully I loved you- that you may have seen in one of my books a faithful reflection of the passion I had for you, and may have thought that it was something to have been loved so well, and may have seen in little bits of 'Dora' touches of your old self sometimes<sup>228</sup>

The death of David's first passionate yet inadequate love (Dora) in favour of the more lasting relationship of the much more suitable and maternal Agnes as a psychological reading of Dickens's own first love and marriage is clear. However, the idea that Dickens names his tenth child after a character he has modelled after his first love affair is more problematic. This idea together with his naming of his daughter after a character he was planning on having die in childbirth makes this relationship between Dickens and his Doras even more problematic.

In May of 1850, Dickens wrote to Forster, 'Still undecided about Dora, but MUST decide to-day'.<sup>229</sup> Dickens gives the impression that he was undecided about Dora's death; however, given the relationship triangle set out between David, Dora, and Agnes, Dickens had little choice. The thirteenth number was made up of Chapters Thirty-Eight through Forty and was published in May. Dickens had introduced Dora in number nine, and as early as the plans for number eleven, Dickens writes 'Is engaged to Dora \_ Yes'.<sup>230</sup> Even though Dickens writes of his

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<sup>228</sup> *Letters*, Vol.7, p.539.

<sup>229</sup> *Letters*, Vol.6, p.94.

<sup>230</sup> Dickens *Working Notes*, p.163.

uncertainty about Dora's fate in May, by the notes for the next number, number twelve which would be published in April, Dickens is hinting at Dora's frailty (both emotionally and physically). The notes read, 'Poor little Dora not bred for ~~the world~~ a working life'.<sup>231</sup> By the notes for number sixteen, which would be published in August, Dickens had decided about Dora. Therefore, when Dickens's daughter Dora was born, Dickens had already planned on having Dora Spenlow die. Dickens was naming his daughter after a doomed character.

One reason for Dickens doing this, perhaps without realising the dark implications of using a 'doomed' name, was the nature of the character herself aside from her demise. In Chapter Forty-One, David confronts Dora about the way in which her aunts treat her. David says, 'My aunt, with whom she gradually became familiar, always called her Little Blossom; and the pleasure of Miss Lavinia's life was to wait upon her, curl her hair, make ornaments for her, and treat her like a pet child'.<sup>232</sup> Dora, Dickens's 'ink and paper child' is treated as a child by her aunts and David's aunt, and then Dickens decides to name his new child after Dora.

But within this identity complexity is another hint that Dickens knew that giving his new child the name of a doomed character was wrong. In the above quotation, David mentions Betsy Trotwood's habit of calling Dora, 'Little Blossom.' three chapters later, Betsy herself intimates the metaphor in the name, 'But Little Blossom is a very tender little blossom, and the wind must be gentle with her'.<sup>233</sup> In the next number, in Chapter Forty-Eight, Dickens ends the chapter by finishing the metaphor, 'Oh what a fatal name it was, and how the blossom withered in its bloom upon the tree!'<sup>234</sup> This quote is altered from a line written in the working notes for

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<sup>231</sup> Dickens *Working Notes* p.165.

<sup>232</sup> Charles Dickens, *David Copperfield*, ed. by Nitin Govil and David Gates (New York: Modern Library, 2000). p.561.

<sup>233</sup> *DC*, p.593.

<sup>234</sup> *DC*, p.649.

the sixteenth number only by the addition of 'upon the tree'. Dickens himself is acknowledging the connection of the nickname and the character's fate. Knowing Dickens's careful working out of names, we can assume that the nickname 'Little Blossom' was intentionally chosen for its fatal metaphor. However, considering this, it is interesting that Dickens would choose a fatal name for his new 'real' child.

Earlier in the chapter, Dickens writes that David and Dora's own lost baby, 'might change my child-wife to a woman. It was not to be'.<sup>235</sup> Dickens's own daughter Dora would never grow from child to woman. Within the dying Copperfield baby, the fated name of Dora, and the child-wife that was never to be a woman, Dickens's 'control' over the writing of his literary children seems all too connected to the sad fate of his own 'real' daughter.

In his letters during the time of writing Dora Spenlow's decline and the birth and short life of Dora Dickens, Dickens himself seems confused as to which is which. On the 20<sup>th</sup> of August, four days after the birth of his 'real' daughter, Dickens writes letters to both Catherine and John Forster mentioning 'Dora'. To Catherine, Dickens writes, 'It depends on Dora- I mean my Dora.'<sup>236</sup> The choice of the word 'my' is interesting since by using a qualification, Dickens is intended to clarify which Dora he means but the reference is left unclear. Surely, if talking about Dora Dickens, he would have written 'our' since he was writing to his wife? However, if he does mean Dora Spenlow, by saying 'my', Dickens is almost claiming more ownership for his character than for his biological daughter. Either connection is fraught with problems.

On the same day, Dickens wrote to Forster, 'I have been very hard at work these three days, and have still Dora to kill. But with good luck, I may do it to-

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<sup>235</sup> *DC*, p.648.

<sup>236</sup> *Letters*, Vol.6, p.152.

morrow.’<sup>237</sup> In this letter, Dickens again does not clarify which Dora he means, but Forster must have known of the birth and name of Dickens’s daughter and so the lack of qualification is perhaps more disturbing than the emotional implications of the confusion in the Catherine letter.

The next day, Dickens writes again to Catherine, ‘Even now, I am uncertain of my movements, for, after another splitting day, I have still Dora to kill- I mean the Copperfield Dora- and cannot make certain how long it will take to do.’<sup>238</sup> Here Dickens is quite clear who he means but the letter is still problematic since it writes of killing a character who is the namesake for the daughter born five days ago and is addressed to the mother of that child. Even though Dickens knew of the omen within Dora Spenlow’s name, he seems unaware of any problem in the connection to his daughter.

This is not the case after the death of his daughter. In 1852, the year after Dora Dickens’s death, Dickens writes to Cerjat, ‘Our last baby, we called Dora, in remembrance of Copperfield. It was an ill-omened name, and she followed her predecessor to the land of Shadows.’<sup>239</sup> The case of both doomed Doras was finally closed and Dickens could finally look at the name and feel the resolved connection between both his ‘children’.

Not only were Dickens’s characters likened to children but his entire stories were described thus. Dickens even called an early draft of a number of *NN* an infant in development; ‘I have been at work all day, so if this note is illegible it’s not my fault, but number seventeen’s, which is yet an infant’.<sup>240</sup> Similarly, Dickens described

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<sup>237</sup> *Letters*, Vol.6, p.153.

<sup>238</sup> *Letters*, Vol.6, p.153.

<sup>239</sup> *Letters*, Vol.6, p.670.

<sup>240</sup> *Letters*, Vol.1, p.561.

a publication of one of his sketches as a 'christening' in a letter to the editor of *The Monthly Magazine*.<sup>241</sup>

But while Dickens's characters and novels were often described as his children and the relationship Dickens had with them is often paternal, these metaphors for his writing style were not necessarily meant as physical. He could describe his relationship to his characters as that of a father but this did not necessitate his characters being real. However, this was often the case.

### **3.1.2. Dickens meeting his own creations**

I have already mentioned that Dickens's readers have long been intrigued by Dickens's inspiration in real people for his characters. The Dickens 'originals' were not always famous or renowned people and not always traceable. Dickens often spoke of walking the streets of London to find inspiration amongst the crowds of people populating the streets. Edward Blackmore writes of Dickens's early experiences in London as inspiration, 'Doubtless the varied scenes of life observable in a solicitor's office in London at that time made a great impression on his youthful mind, and constituted the basis of his future success'.<sup>242</sup> John Sherwood remembers Dickens answering his question about how Dickens was inspired by reality for his characters, 'I may say that I have never transferred any character or scene entire [...] that there is scarcely a character or description, the nucleus and substantial body of which was not furnished from reality'.<sup>243</sup>

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<sup>241</sup> *Letters*, Vol.1, p.42.

<sup>242</sup> Collins, Vol.1, pp.10-11.

<sup>243</sup> Collins, Vol.1, pp.46-47.

In 1846 while writing *DS*, Dickens wrote to Forster about missing his Muse, London, while in Switzerland. Dickens wrote about his struggle to write without having London:

it is almost an impossibility. I suppose this is partly the effect of two years' ease, and partly of the absence of streets and numbers of figures. I can't express how much I want these. It seems as if they supplied something to my brain, which it cannot bear, when busy, to lose. For a week or a fortnight I can write prodigiously in a retired place (as at Broadstairs), and a day in London sets me up again and starts me. But the toil and labour of writing, day after day, without that magic lantern, is IMMENSE [...] My figures seem disposed to stagnate without crowds about them.<sup>244</sup>

In the first chapter, I looked at how Dickens's first pieces of writings collected in *SBB* were often pieces inspired by types and tropes living in London. In Dickens's book of memoranda, a few lines tucked in between pages of story and character ideas is one such inspiration, "The uneducated father (or uncle?) in fustian, and the educated boy in spectacles. Whom Leech and I saw at Chatham."<sup>245</sup> Fred Kaplan posits that these two people whom Dickens saw in Chatham were later incarnated in the characters of Gaffer and Charlie Hexham in *OMF*.

However, tracing the real-life original of a character and feeling a literary character is real are two different ideas. One might argue that the felt reality of Dickens's characters is caused by their numerous real-life inspirations. Whether or not this is the case for the characters with real-life counterparts, Dickens viewed all his characters as real beings with whom he could commune in writing.

According to Trollope, characters' reality within their novels' pages is directly related to the novelist's own relationships with his characters. Thus, the reason why

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<sup>244</sup> *Letters*, Vol.4, pp.612-614.

<sup>245</sup> Charles Dickens, *Charles Dickens's Book of Memoranda: A Photographic and Typographic Facsimile of the Notebook Begun in January 1855*, ed. by Fred Kaplan, 1st edn (New York: New York Public Library, 1981). p.6.

Dickens's characters have been appropriated so willingly by his readers was because these characters were equally as real to Dickens himself. Trollope writes:

He [novelist] desires to make his readers so intimately acquainted with his characters that the creatures of his brain should be to them speaking, moving, living, human creatures. This he can never do unless he knows those fictitious personages himself, and he can never know them unless he can live with them in the full reality of established intimacy. They must be with him as he lies down to sleep, and as he wakes from his dreams. He must learn to hate them and to love them. He must argue with them, quarrel with them, forgive them, and even submit to them. He must know them whether they be cold-blooded or passionate, whether true or false, and how far true, and how far false.<sup>246</sup>

While Trollope notes characters as 'fictitious personages', his description of the novelists' 'intimacy' with characters is descriptive of a very real relationship. In fact, though the writer is a 'creator', he still must 'submit' to his characters if needs be and thus does not have full control over said characters. Sir Arthur Helps wrote of Dickens, 'I believe that he lived a great deal with the creatures of his imagination, and that they surrounded him at all times. Such men live in two worlds, the actual and the imaginative; and he lived intensely in both'.<sup>247</sup>

In her memories of talking with Dickens, Constance Cross highlights the crossing over of Dickens's characters from the imaginary to the corporeal, 'Then we talked of his work, of the creations of his brain, and the room became peopled somehow with those creations, for, as we named them, he spoke as if they were living beings, the friends and companions of his everyday life'.<sup>248</sup>

The next two images show Dickens, not surrounded by or in some way creating his characters, but illustrate Dickens's characters on the same plane of reality as Dickens. In these images, Dickens is physically interacting with the creations of his imagination.

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<sup>246</sup> Trollope, p.211.

<sup>247</sup> Collins, Vol.2, p.333.

<sup>248</sup> Collins, Vol2, p.346.

Figure 16 was published in *Judy, or the London Serio-Comic Journal* in October of 1867, a couple of weeks before Dickens departed England for his American Reading Tour. The comic shows Dickens shaking hands with John Bull as his characters surround the two men. It is clear that Dickens is saying farewell to John Bull but it is not quite clear if the characters are bidding Dickens farewell or accompanying Dickens on his trip to America. The only character that shows evidence of travelling with Dickens is Mrs Gamp since she is carrying luggage. Perhaps this is because Mrs Gamp was one of the characters who regularly appeared in the public readings.

Although Dickens is not directly interacting with his characters, the placing of his characters surrounding him sets his characters on the same plane as him. Instead of Dickens thinking of his characters or conjuring them into existence, he is coporeally surrounded by them. In the next image, Figure 17, Dickens is sitting at a table, seemingly in the act of writing, but instead of coming from his pen, his characters are again physically in the room with him. Unlike the Proctor comic, Beard has Dickens actually meeting Oliver Twist, who bows before him as a subject meeting a patron. Many other characters look on from either side of Dickens and book shelves peek out from behind curtains behind him but it is only Oliver to whom Dickens is paying attention.





**Figure 16: *Au Revoir!*, by J. Proctor, pub. *Judy: Or, the London Serio-Comic Journal* (30 October 1867). Image© Charles Dickens Museum**



**Figure 17: *Charles Dickens Receiving His Characters*, by William Holbrook Beard (1874). Image© Charles Dickens Museum**

James Fields remembers Dickens telling him of how real his characters were in a memory recorded in his book *Yesterdays with Authors*. Fields writes:

I remember he said, on one of these occasions, that during the compositions of his first stories he could never entirely dismiss the characters about whom

he happened to be writing; that while the *Old Curiosity Shop* was in process of composition Little Nell followed him about everywhere; that while he was writing *Oliver Twist* Fagin the Jew would never let him rest, even in his most retired moments; that at midnight and in the morning, on the sea and on the land, Tiny Tim and Little Bob Cratchit were ever tugging at his coat-sleeve, as if impatient for him to get back to his desk and continue the story of their lives.<sup>249</sup>

It is interesting that Dickens is telling Fields of his characters badgering him while their stories are progressing, that even though the novels are not finished, the characters themselves are fully formed. While eager for Dickens to finish writing, the characters' existence is not dependent on the writing or else they would be half formed. Henry Burnett, Dickens's brother-in-law, corroborates this memory, 'It was a fact not unknown to his friends that he was not always alone in his study, but lived at times, day after day, with his own creations'.<sup>250</sup>

Fields continues, recalling how Dickens decided to control his characters more in his later career:

[he] saw what serious demands his characters were accustomed to make for the constant attention of his already overtasked brain, he resolved that the phantom individuals should no longer intrude on his hours of recreation and rest, but that when he closed the door of his study he would shut them all in, and only meet them again when he came back to resume his task. [...] He said, also, that when the children of his brain had once been launched, free and clear of him, into the world, they would sometimes turn up in the most unexpected manner to look their father in the face.<sup>251</sup>

Dickens's characters were so real to him that even when out with others, he could not ignore the almost hallucination-like being of his characters. Fields remembers walking with Dickens, 'Sometimes he would pull my arm while we were walking together and whisper, "Let us avoid Mr. Pumblechook, who is crossing the street to meet us"; or "Mr. Micawber is coming; let us turn down this alley to get out of his

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<sup>249</sup> Collins Vol.2, p.311.

<sup>250</sup> Collins, Vol.1, p.23.

<sup>251</sup> Collins, Vol.2, p.311.

way”'.<sup>252</sup> George Henry Lewes also remembers Dickens speaking to him about the reality of his characters. As Lewes explained, ‘Dickens once declared to me that every word said by his characters was distinctly heard by him; I was at first not a little puzzled [...] but the surprise vanished when I thought of the phenomena of hallucination’.<sup>253</sup>

Fields’s memories are not the only evidence of Dickens’s real relationship with his characters. A perusal of the twelve volumes of Dickens’s letters reveals a number of times where Dickens quotes his characters as if they are real people. Of all these instances however, it is a letter to a Master W. H. Hughes in 1838 in which Dickens speaks of his writing and the lives of his characters in *NN* in a manner different to many of the other quotations. The letter says:

I have given Squeers one cut on the neck and two on the head, at which he appeared much surprised and began to cry, which being a cowardly thing is just what I should have expected from him--wouldn't you? I have carefully done what you told me in your letter, about the lamb and the two sheeps [sic] for the little boys. They have also had some good ale and porter, and some wine. I am very sorry you didn't say what wine you would like them to have. I gave them some sherry which they liked very much, except one boy who was a little sick and choaked [sic] a good deal. He was rather greedy, and that's the truth, and I believe it went the wrong way, which I say served him right, and I hope you will say so, too. Nicholas had his roast lamb as you said he was to, but he could not eat it all, and says if you do not mind his doing so, he should like to have the rest hashed tomorrow, with some greens which he is very fond of and so am I. I said I was sure you would give him leave. He said he did not like to have his porter hot, for he thought it spoilt the flavour, so I let him have it cold. You should have seen him drink it. I thought he would never have left off. I also gave him three pound of money- all in sixpences to make it seem more- and he said directly that he should give more than half of it to his mama and sister and divide the rest with poor Smike. And I say he is a good fellow for saying so, and if anybody says he isn't, I am ready to fight him whenever they like. --There. Fanny Squeers shall be attended to, depend upon it. Your drawing of her is very like, except that I don't think the hair is quite curly enough. The nose is particularly like hers, and so are the legs. She is a nasty disagreeable thing and I know it will make her very cross when she sees it, and what I say is that I hope it may.<sup>254</sup>

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<sup>252</sup> Collins, Vol.2, p.311.

<sup>253</sup> Collins, Vol.1, p.25.

<sup>254</sup> *Letters*, Vol.1, pp.466-467.

Hughes wrote to Dickens about the characters in *Nickleby*. In this letter, Dickens is not only speaking to Hugh about his control over the characters' fates, but Dickens is also speaking of the same characters' independent actions and thoughts. In one letter, Dickens is both illustrating his authorial control and admitting he lacks it.

Dickens himself admits to Lady Holland in 1839, 'I was engaged at the time with some imaginary persons whose affairs have attained such a very complicated pitch just now, that they sometimes confuse me in my recollection of my own?'<sup>255</sup> That Dickens saw himself both as a creator and as a vessel through which his characters spoke is clear. That Dickens was unable to reconcile the felt reality of his characters with the process of writing is also clear. In the next section, I will look at Dickens in the process of writing as a way of interpreting the 'act' of creation within writing. As Wim Van Mierlo writes in his chapter 'The Archaeology of the Manuscript', 'Creation, in other words, does not happen according to a few binary operations, but through a series of simultaneous, multirelational switches, some of which are visible in the archival dossier and some invisible'.<sup>256</sup>

### **3.2. 'I work here, like a Steam Engine': Manuscript analyses<sup>257</sup>**

If we consider Charles Dickens's 'act of writing' much like gestation and birth, and his characters like children, then manuscript material is illustrative of the symbiosis of Dickens and authorship. Dickens is not fully in control of his characters yet their existence on the page depends on his pen.

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<sup>255</sup> *Letters*, Vol.1, p.575.

<sup>256</sup> Wim Van Mierlo, 'The Archaeology of the Manuscript: Towards Modern Palaeography', in *The Boundaries of the Literary Archive: Reclamation and Representation*, ed. by Carrie Smith and Lisa Stead (Farnham and Burlington: Ashgate, 2013), pp. 15-29.p.24.

<sup>257</sup> *Letters*, Vol.9, p.421.

By viewing the manuscripts for their evidence of creation, I am, in a sense, attempting to trace the historiography of the characters' creations. As Wim Van Mierlo writes, 'Literary archives allow us to study that writing not only in its finished, but also in its inchoate, embryonic state'.<sup>258</sup> Looking at the manuscript as a work in progress can help us see how Dickens was writing.

### 3.2.1. Dolly Varden: writing the female object

Many of Dickens's letters written while he was writing *BR* are concerned with the writing of and illustration of the riot and mob scenes from the story. For example, Dickens was quite concerned about how the crowd and riot scenes would be depicted by his two illustrators for the novel, George Cattermole and H.K. Browne (Phiz). Dickens wrote to Cattermole about an illustration for the sacking of the Maypole pub and the burning of the Warren;

Here is a subject for the next number [...] as the best opportunities of illustration are all coming off now, and we are in the thick of the story. The rioters went, sir, from John Willet's bar (where you saw them to such good purpose straight to The Warren, which house they plundered, sacked, burned, pulled down as much of as they could, and greatly damaged and destroyed. They are supposed to have left it bout half an hour. It is night, and the ruins are here and there flaming and smoking.<sup>259</sup>

Dickens seems as excited about the illustration opportunities during the active part of the story as he was about writing this part, writing in a letter a month later, 'I have let all the prisoners out of Newgate, burnt down Lord Mansfield's, and played the very devil. Another number will finish the fires, and help us on towards the end. I feel quite smoky when I am at work'.<sup>260</sup>

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<sup>258</sup> Van Mierlo, p.15.

<sup>259</sup> *Letters*, Vol.2, p.352.

<sup>260</sup> *Letters*, Vol.2, p.385.

Many critical works also focus on these moments in the novel, such as Kathleen Tillotson's and John Butt's *Dickens at Work*. But it is the character of Dolly Varden who interests me in the novel and in the *BR* manuscript.



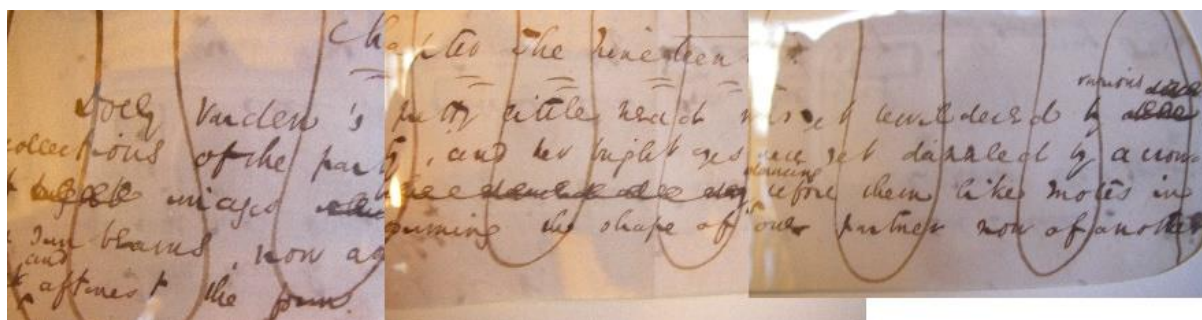
**Figure 18: *Dolly Varden and Emma Haredale*, by Phiz (1842). Image© Charles Dickens Museum.**

Written in 1841 and originally published as a part of *MHC*, the ideas for *BR* had been stewing in Dickens's mind for quite some time. It was to be, like many of Dickens's novels, a retrospective plot and the first of only two of what would come to be called Dickens's 'Historical Novels.' Dolly, while a main female character in the novel, is not the central heroine, that is Emma Haredale, Dolly's friend, who is wealthier and more delicate; nor is Dolly a grotesque comic character. The two women can be seen in Figure 18.

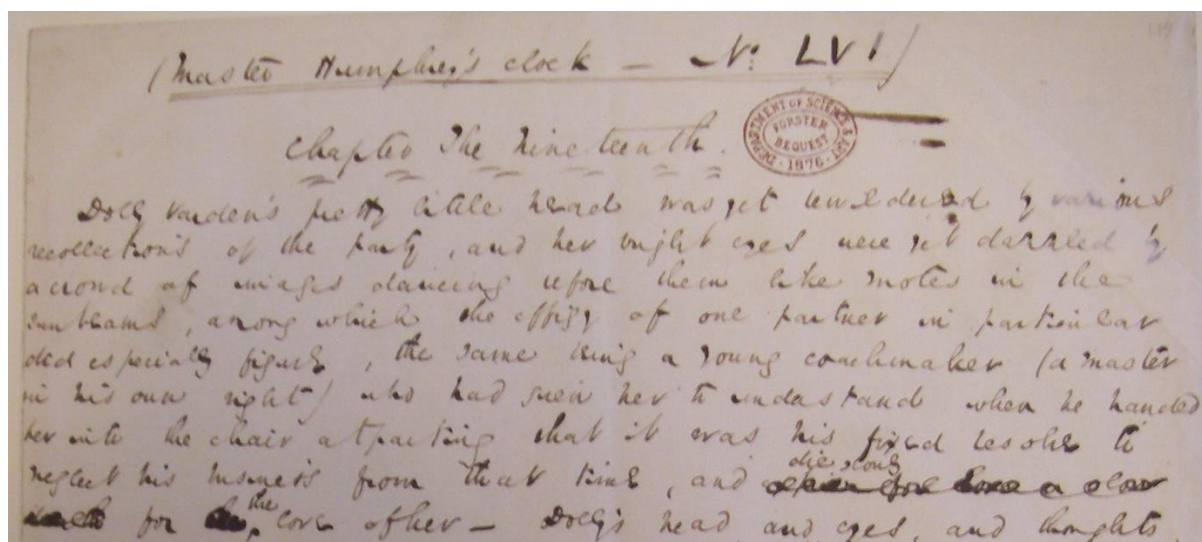
The following moment in the manuscript is not the first time Dolly appears in the novel but it does seem to be a significant moment in Dickens's writing her description. This chapter contains the main description of Dolly and introduces the reader to the problematic nature of Dolly's beauty. Unlike many of Dickens's angelic female leads, Dolly Varden's initial description is altered to heighten her sexual



objectivity. Unlike many of the other chapters, Chapter Nineteen has an aborted beginning. Seen in Figure 19, this first beginning was crossed out and the chapter was begun again on a fresh page.<sup>261</sup>



**Figure 19: *Barnaby Rudge* Manuscript, Chapter Nineteen, Vol.3, p.179 verso. ©National Art Library**



**Figure 20: *Barnaby Rudge* Manuscript, Chapter Nineteen, Vol.3, p.178. ©National Art Library**

Compared to the continued beginning for Chapter Nineteen in the manuscript, which can be seen in Figure 20, the text itself varies little between the two and again little from them to the final published version, the difference being in the description of Dolly's visions of partners.<sup>262</sup> Therefore, the reason why Dickens

<sup>261</sup> National Art Library (Great Britain). Manuscript. MSL/1876/Forster/155.p.179 verso.

<sup>262</sup> National Art Library (Great Britain). Manuscript. MSL/1876/Forster/155.p.178.

felt the need to begin the chapter again (the second version bearing no edits until the eighth line because the text was so similar) is unclear. Dickens only begins to edit again when he reaches the description of the coachmaker's love for Dolly.

The next important moment in the chapter comes with the now often repeated description of Dolly, seen in Figure 21. The passage from the published book reads:

As to Dolly, there she was again, the very pink and pattern of good looks, in a smart little cherry-coloured mantle, with a hood of the same drawn over her head, and upon the top of that hood, a little straw hat trimmed with cherry-coloured ribbons, and worn the merest trifle on one side—just enough in short to make it the wickedest and most provoking head-dress that ever malicious milliner devised. And not to speak of the manner in which these cherry-coloured decorations brightened her eyes, or vied with her lips, or shed a new bloom on her face, she wore such a cruel little muff, and such a heart-rending pair of shoes, and was so surrounded and hemmed in, as it were, by aggravations of all kinds.<sup>263</sup>

This passage has since been used as a reference for the now-famous painting of Dolly by W.P. Frith. Even though the moment from the novel in which Dolly is depicted in the Frith painting comes later, it is this description which sets up Dolly Varden's look. It is this passage which is quoted in the information for Frith's painting in the Victoria & Albert Museum's catalogue as a reference.<sup>264</sup>

Dickens's anthropomorphising of Dolly's clothing is used as an extension of her personality. Dolly's shoes are not 'heart-rending' on their own but become so because Dolly herself is. However, not only are Dolly's clothes described as an material display of her personality but Dolly herself is constructed within the limitations of her clothing. The cherry-colour of her ribbons and mantle 'vie' with her lips and heighten the colour of her cheeks and eyes. Dolly's character is literally

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<sup>263</sup> Charles Dickens, *Barnaby Rudge*, ed. by Gordon Spence (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1987). p.207.

<sup>264</sup> 'Dolly Varden Information', in *V&A Search the Collections*  
 <<http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O80877/dolly-var-den-oil-painting-frith-william-powell/#>>  
 [accessed 17 February 2015]



constructed by her clothes. Dickens even writes of her being ‘surrounded’ and ‘hemmed in’, again aligning her identity with her clothing.

But given the significance of this passage to Dolly’s very character, it is important to note that one of the most memorable descriptions- Dolly’s cherry colouring- was not an initial description. That this colour was changed in the manuscript text as Dickens wrote is proof that much as Dickens attempted to control Dolly within her attire, that structure itself did not come easy.

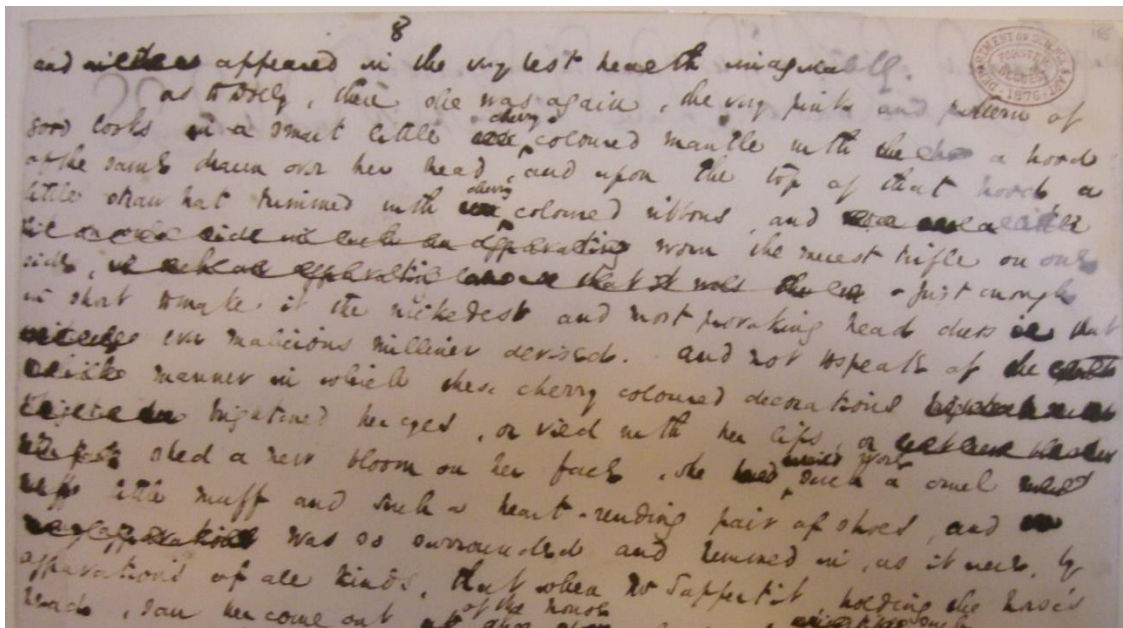


Figure 21: *Barnaby Rudge* Manuscript, Chapter Nineteen, Vol.3, p.185. © National Art Library

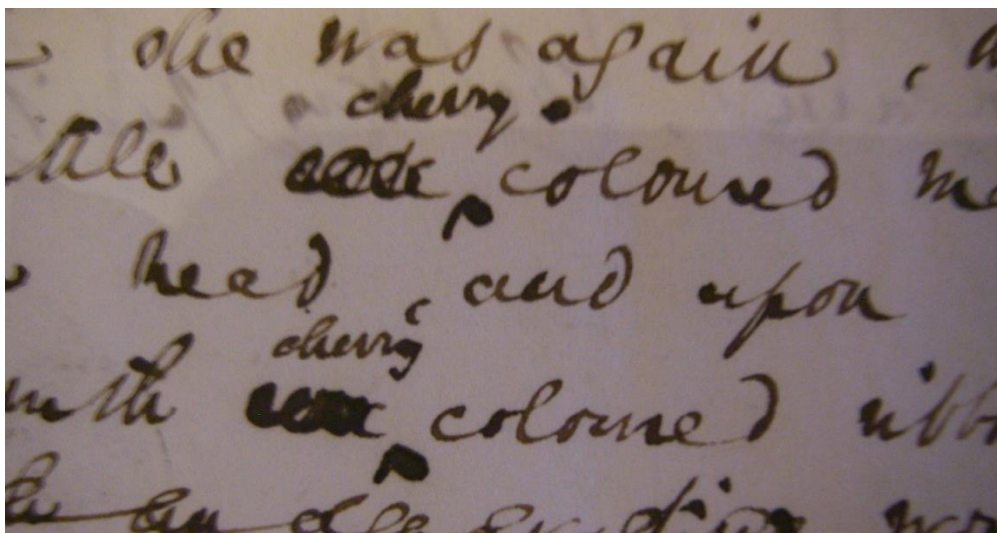


Figure 22: Inset from Figure 21. © National Art Library

Figure 21 is the first half of the page which bears the passage quoted above.<sup>265</sup> Inset from this image is Figure 22, which shows the editing of the colour choice.<sup>266</sup> It is difficult to read the original adjective but it appears to be 'pink' as the 'k' is just visible in the first cross-out. The decision to change 'pink-coloured' to 'cherry-coloured' was edited in the first two instances. By the third mention however, 'cherry' is first written so Dickens either changed the previous two after writing the third or just before writing the third description. There are other edits in this section and the matching ink colour and thickness of lines in the edits and cross-outs suggest Dickens was editing as he wrote rather than revisiting the draft. Therefore, rather than Dickens describing a clear image from his mind, Dolly was instead 'shaped' within the process of writing, much as a child develops during pregnancy.

In analysing the text and character of Dolly as a whole, the choice of 'cherry' seems so significant and suitable that it is interesting to think that it was not Dickens's first choice. The slang association of 'cherry' with virginity is etymologically debatable since it is slang and hard to trace with absolute certainty. The *Oxford English Dictionary* references a slang dictionary from 1889 which associates cherry with pretty girls; the *OED* does not directly connect the word with virginity or hymen until quoting sources from the 1920s. The slang dictionary referenced from 1889 is *A Dictionary of Slang, Jargon, & Cant* and lists 'cherry' as thieves slang for 'a young girl'.<sup>267</sup> It also lists 'cherry-pie' as common slang for 'the sense of the more modern "tart" or girl'<sup>268</sup> and 'cherry-pipe' as thieves rhyming slang for a woman, since 'pipe'

<sup>265</sup> National Art Library (Great Britain). Manuscript. MSL/1876/Forster/155.p.185.

<sup>266</sup> National Art Library (Great Britain). Manuscript. MSL/1876/Forster/155.p.185.

<sup>267</sup> "Cherry", in *A Dictionary of Slang, Jargon, & Cant*, ed. by Albert Barrere and Charles G. Leland (London: Ballantyne Press, 1889), 1 OF 2, 243. p.243.

<sup>268</sup> 'Cherry-pie', in *A Dictionary of Slang, Jargon, & Cant*, ed. by Albert Berrere and Charles G. Leland (London: Ballantyne Press, 1889), 1 OF 2. p.243.

was rhyming slang for ripe.<sup>269</sup> Therefore, while this slang dictionary from the end of the nineteenth century does not directly list 'cherry' as a metaphor for virginity, it does connect both 'cherry' and 'ripe' for woman and the link can thus be inferred.

What the *OED* does not consider though was the slang usage previous to the nineteenth century. For instance, there are examples of using the words 'cherry', 'cherry-pit', and 'cherry-stone' in Shakespeare's works which could infer euphemistic tendencies. In fact, Frankie Rubenstein's book *A Dictionary of Shakespeare's Puns and Their Significance* from 1989 uses evidence from Shakespeare's texts (including *a Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Twelfth Night*) and suggests that the term 'cherry' was indeed used as slang for 'maidenhead' or 'vulva'.<sup>270</sup> Rubenstein's book suggests that the connection of 'cherry' to female virginity was used before the nineteenth century. Dickens was familiar with both Shakespeare and London slang and so it could be inferred that Dickens was aware of the euphemism and so his using the term for descriptions of Dolly might have indeed had a double meaning. Descriptions of Dolly within the novel abound with adjectives like 'flushed', reiterating her beauty even in distress.<sup>271</sup> It is not so far a leap to think that Dickens may have had a deeper meaning to Dolly's 'cherry-coloured' dress and cheeks.

One such instance of Dolly's description which might corroborate this theory and bears insight itself into Dickens's writing is in Chapter Fifty-Nine. In this chapter, when Dolly Varden and Emma Haredale are being held captive by Hugh and Dennis, a description of Dolly sits at the bottom of the manuscript page, seen in Figure 23. This passage includes both cross-outs and evidence of quick writing. In

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<sup>269</sup> 'Cherry-pipe', in *A Dictionary of Slang, Jargon, & Cant*, ed. by Albert Berrere and Charles G. Leland (London: Ballantyne Press, 1889), 1 OF 2. p.243.

<sup>270</sup> 'Cherry', in *A Dictionary of Shakespeare's Puns and Their Significance*, ed. by Frankie Rubenstein (Hampshire and London: Macmillan, 1989), p. 48.

<sup>271</sup> This is most clear in chapter Fifty-Nine when Dolly and Emma are captive. Dickens writes, 'her whole self a hundred times more beautiful in this heightened aspect than ever she had been before' (BR, p.537).



people as objects, subjecting them to a controlling and curious gaze'.<sup>276</sup> That at this moment in the novel as well as the description of Dolly which anticipates her first sexual assault by Hugh, Dolly is as an object onto which the male characters and the male narrator (and male author) project their sexual desires. Unlike the good 'angelic' heroines of other novels, Dolly is a pure object of the male gaze who is continually subjected to assaults and is only found more beautiful for it.

Mulvey further explains the objectification of the passive female in the active male gaze:

The determining male gaze projects its fantasy onto the female figure, which is styled accordingly. In their traditional exhibitionist role women are simultaneously looked at and displayed, with their appearance coded for strong visual and erotic impact so that they can be said to connote *to-be-looking-atness*.<sup>277</sup>

The above moment becomes clear when Hugh pulls Dolly from the carriage in chapter Fifty-Nine. In a passage deeply disturbingly descriptive of a sexual assault:

He thrust the little man aside as he spoke, and mounting on the steps, which were half let down, pulled down the blind by force, and stared into the chaise like an ogre into his larder.<sup>278</sup>

Hugh's 'thrusting', 'mounting', 'forcing' along with the 'half let down' steps is a kind of rape of the character who has been continually associated with cherries and flushing. Even the first reference we get to Dolly after the assault is Hugh speaking to her. Hugh again calls Dolly 'cherry-lipped'.<sup>279</sup> It is only until after the male characters, Hugh and Sim, resume their journey and exit the scene that we are allowed a first-hand account of Dolly and this is even reminiscent of post-assault

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<sup>276</sup> Mulvey, p.17.

<sup>277</sup> Mulvey, p.19.

<sup>278</sup> Dickens, *Barnaby Rudge*, p.462.

<sup>279</sup> Dickens, *Barnaby Rudge*, p.463.

imagery, 'her hair dishevelled, her dress torn, her dark eyelashes wet with tears, her bosom heaving- her face, now pale with fear, now crimsoned with indignation'.<sup>280</sup>

Dolly's existence and descriptions as an object on which to act and stare is slowly introduced as though she is a pretty, innocent maid. However, the veiled insinuation of 'cherry' immediately sets up a darker, sexual nature to her objectification. Had Dickens stayed with the pink imagery, this sexuality might not have been as clear. Later in the novel, as the male characters assault the female characters, the narrative voice has already associated Dolly with sexual beauty and thus is not perturbed by the forced encounters. In fact, as the narrator tells the reader:

she only looked the better for it, and tempted them the more. When her eyes flashed angrily, and her red lips slightly parted, to give her rapid breathing vent, who could resist it? [...] what mortal eyes could have avoided wandering to the delicate bodice, the streaming hair, the neglected dress, the perfect abandonment and unconsciousness of the blooming beauty?<sup>281</sup>

Dolly's existence in the novel, supported by the adjectives which Dickens used, is that of an object. As Mulvey writes:

woman then stands in patriarchal culture as a signifier for the male other, bound by a symbolic order in which man can live out his fantasies and obsessions through linguistic command by imposing them on the silent image of woman still tied in her place as bearer, not maker, of meaning.<sup>282</sup>

Dolly bears the image forced upon her as well as the clothes and colours that come to define her. Dickens, through his writing, is able to create the assault fantasy forbidden in society, yet permissible even through the narrative voice. Thus Dolly is a pure object of the male gaze. Dolly's objectification moves beyond the text into commodities with the celebration of her image and fashion; this will be further examined in chapter Five.

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<sup>280</sup> Dickens, *Barnaby Rudge*, p.463.

<sup>281</sup> Dickens, *Barnaby Rudge*, pp.466-467.

<sup>282</sup> Mulvey, p.15.

There are a number of instances in the manuscript where Dickens seems to write quickly and with few edits<sup>283</sup> just as there are an equal number of instances where Dickens seems to have great difficulty finding the right phrasing.<sup>284</sup> Unfortunately I do not have the space to look at the entire manuscript or even just the passages concerning Dolly but I hope to have shown a few examples of ways in which Dickens's editing (or lack of editing) can be used as evidence of the way in which the character of Dolly took shape within the text.

### **3.2.2. Sairey Gamp: Writing a Favourite**

The character of Sairey Gamp stands out in the manuscript for *MC* for three elements of her character development. In the following section, I will look at Dickens writing Mrs Gamp's name, her now iconic umbrella, and her speech. While Dickens struggled with the first two, the third came easily. This difference of writing and editing illustrates my point that to Dickens, his characters were often external beings. Mrs Gamp's speech is different than the first two elements because Dickens writes her speech as though he is transcribing from an external stimulus. Mrs Gamp is present in five of the eight volumes of the manuscript for *MC*, first appearing in Chapter Nineteen, published in number eight of the novel in August 1843. There are only two pages of working notes for *MC* along with five pages of name trials and six pages of changing titles.<sup>285</sup> Although Martin Chuzzlewit goes through the most name

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<sup>283</sup> Such as Vol.5, p23 of the manuscript in which Dolly and her father are talking and Dickens's script is deeply slanted with very few edits (National Art Library (Great Britain). Manuscript. MSL/1876/Forster/155.p.23).

<sup>284</sup> In Vol.7, p271, Miss Miggs is talking to Hugh about Dolly and Emma's capture and the edits, cross-outs, and additions are so numerous that the writing is layered and cramped and Dickens has to draw lines around added phrases to show where in they are meant to be in the overall script (National Art Library (Great Britain). Manuscript. MSL/1876/Forster/155.p.271).

<sup>285</sup> Charles Dickens, 'Martin Chuzzlewit', in *Dickens' Working Notes for His Novels*, ed. by Harry Stone (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), pp. 15-46.

changes himself (including Sweezlebach and Chuzzletoe),<sup>286</sup> nowhere in any of the pages does any name even close to Sairey Gamp appear. The working notes themselves are for numbers IV and VI (Chapters Nine and Ten of number IV).<sup>287</sup>

The absence of any plans or name trials for Gamp may have been because Dickens had not thought of her until well into writing the novel. As she only appears in Chapter Nineteen, and many of the main characters have already been established by this point, Gamp was probably more of a creation of the writing process rather than a planned character. We can see evidence of this in the in-text alteration of Sairey Gamp's name in the manuscript pages for Chapter Nineteen.

Dickens wrote to Forster in July of 1843, 'Tell me what you think of Mrs. Gamp? You'll find it easy to get through the hundred [sic] of misprints in her conversation, but I want your opinion at once. I think you know already something of mine. I mean to make a mark with her'.<sup>288</sup> Dickens seemed to be instantly taken with the character. The name Gamp has since become synonymous with umbrellas after her well-known prop.<sup>289</sup> However, these umbrellas could easily have been called 'Toggle' or 'Pamp'.<sup>290</sup>

In Figure 24, we can see the line of cross-outs where Dickens has written a number of names for the character who would be Sairey Gamp. Rather than write a name and cross it out afterwards (as we saw Dickens had done with the word 'cherry') Dickens played with names as he was writing. Instantly on writing 'Toggle', he was unhappy and wrote out 'Boggle' (or 'Doggle'), 'Pamp', and what looks like

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<sup>286</sup> Dickens, *Working Notes*, p.30.

<sup>287</sup> Dickens, *Working Notes*, pp.42 and 44.

<sup>288</sup> *Letters*, Vol.3, p.520.

<sup>289</sup> The second definition of 'Gamp' in the *OED* is 'an umbrella, *esp.* one tied up in a loose, untidy fashion. Also more fully Gamp Umbrella'. "Gamp", in *The Oxford English Dictionary Online* <[www.oed.com/view/entry/76540?rskey=ZnoaMt&result=1#eid](http://www.oed.com/view/entry/76540?rskey=ZnoaMt&result=1#eid)> [accessed 26 May 2017]

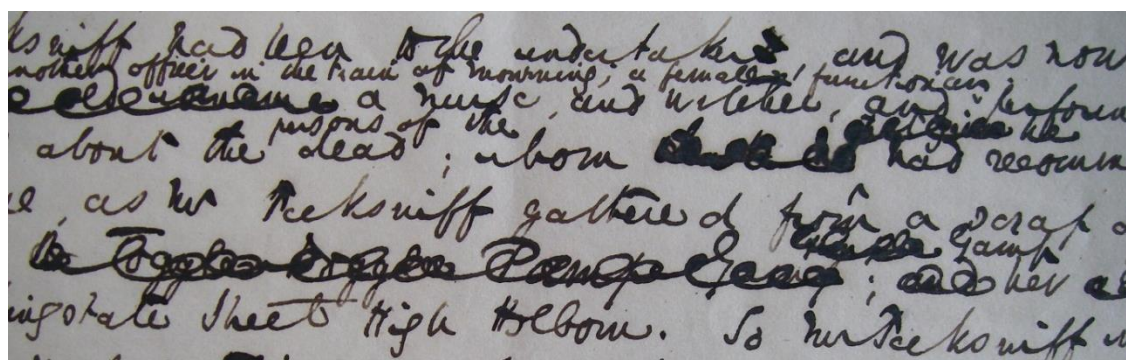
<sup>290</sup> National Art Library (Great Britain). Manuscript. MSL/1876/Forster/157.p.377.



‘Gamp’ before crossing out and adding in over text he had continued to write, two names one of which is the final ‘Gamp’.<sup>291</sup>

Further down on the page, Dickens again changes the name in the text. This name, seen crossed-out in Figure 25, looks like ‘Gimple’ and is the same as the final name in the previous list, looking like Dickens had settled on this name and continued to write. In Figure 26, we see the third time on this page where Dickens has again written ‘Gimple’ and then changed his mind. However, by this time, Dickens changes the name in the text next to the cross-out. (In Figure 25 his change is also adjacent rather than above but this is because the name ends the paragraph. Since there was no writing next to the name, Dickens was able to edit in full text rather than between lines.) He then must have moved back to the top of the page, inserted two more names above the first list, finally settling on ‘Gamp’ and changed the other two uses.

By the final use of Mrs Gamp’s name, see in Figure 27, on this single sheet for Chapter Nineteen, ‘Gamp’ is the decided name and bears no edits. It is interesting that for someone who had played around with other names on separate pages, that Dickens should be unsure of Gamp’s name within the manuscript text itself.



**Figure 24: Martin Chuzzlewit Manuscript, Chapter Nineteen, Vol.8, p.377 (1).**  
©National Art Library

<sup>291</sup> National Art Library (Great Britain). Manuscript. MSL/1876/Forster/157.p.377.

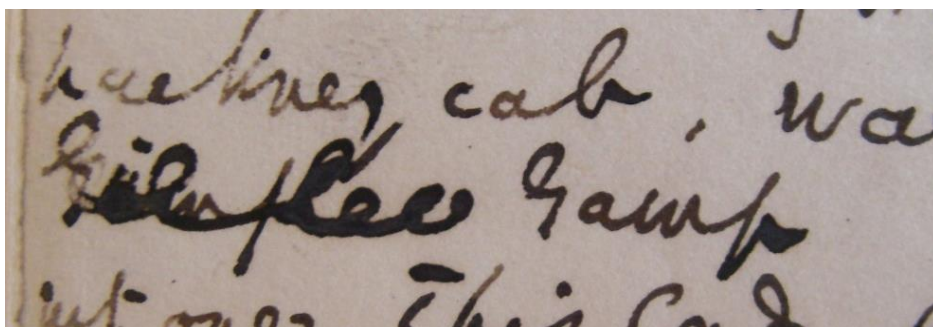


Figure 25: *Martin Chuzzlewit* Manuscript, Chapter Nineteen, Vol.4, p.377 (2).  
©National Art Library

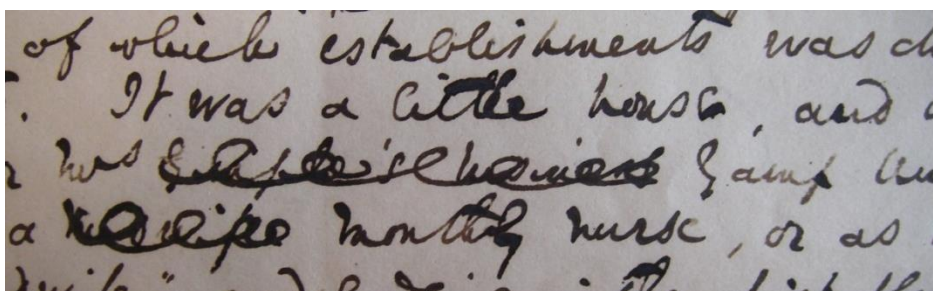


Figure 26: *Martin Chuzzlewit* Manuscript, Chapter Nineteen, Vol.4, p.377 (3).  
©National Art Library

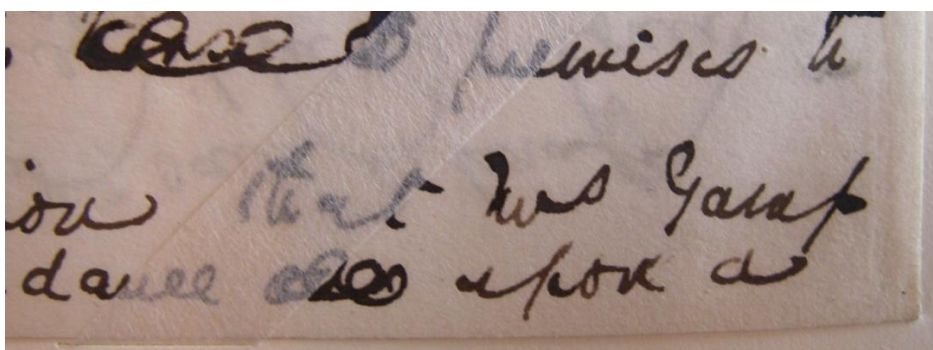


Figure 27: *Martin Chuzzlewit* Manuscript, Chapter Nineteen, Vol.4, p.377 (4).  
©National Art Library

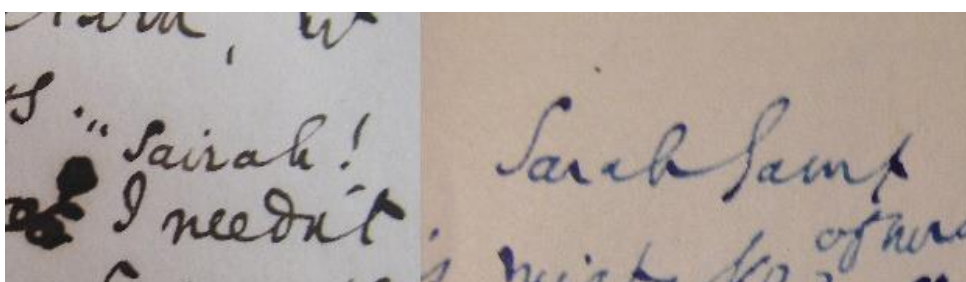


Figure 28: *Martin Chuzzlewit* Manuscript, Chapter Nineteen, Vol.5 p.39 and Vol.8 p.323. ©National Art Library

Dickens kept the name Gamp but he intentionally has other characters change Gamp's name throughout the manuscript. These slight alterations to Gamp's first name also appear in the final printed text and so Dickens must have meant them intentionally. (As we saw in his letter to Forster above, Dickens was careful about checking the proofs since spelling mistakes were likely in Gamp's speech therefore he would have changed these name misprints if he had not intended them). Two of these instances can be seen in Figure 28 from Chapters Twenty-Nine and Forty-Nine.

Harry Stone discusses Dickens playing with names in the introduction to the printed collection of Dickens's *Working Notes*. In particular, Stone references the pages of name trials in the notes for *MC*. While Gamp does not appear there, but appears in the text, Stone's assessment is still valid:

That his naming tells us so much [...] is not surprising. His letters, trial titles, lists of names, and working notes constantly demonstrate that he was preternaturally sensitive to names; he took enormous pains to embody in his names the elusive essence of the thing named. For Dickens, names were truly magical; they concealed and revealed identity.<sup>292</sup>

By looking at the placement of Mrs Gamp's name trials within the manuscript text rather than the working notes, we can conclude that her character was created in the moment rather than planned out ahead.

The second element of Mrs Gamp's character in the manuscript is her umbrella. On page 380 of the manuscript, we see that Dickens had trouble describing the now-iconic prop. Sylvère Monod writes, 'No list of Mrs Gamp's prominent characteristics would be complete without mention of her umbrella, since that item of her equipment has caused her entrance into dictionaries of the English language as a common noun'.<sup>293</sup> In Figure 29, we can see the cramped and edited passages which first describe Gamp's umbrella compared to the fairly easily written

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<sup>292</sup> Stone, p.xxv.

<sup>293</sup> Sylvère Monod, *Martin Chuzzlewit* (Abingdon, New York City: Routledge, 2009 [1985]).p.69.

description after of Mrs Gamp in the cab. Dickens appears to have little trouble describing Mrs Gamp's actions but trouble describing her umbrella. Initially, Mrs Gamp and her umbrella are written as though they are two distinct characters.

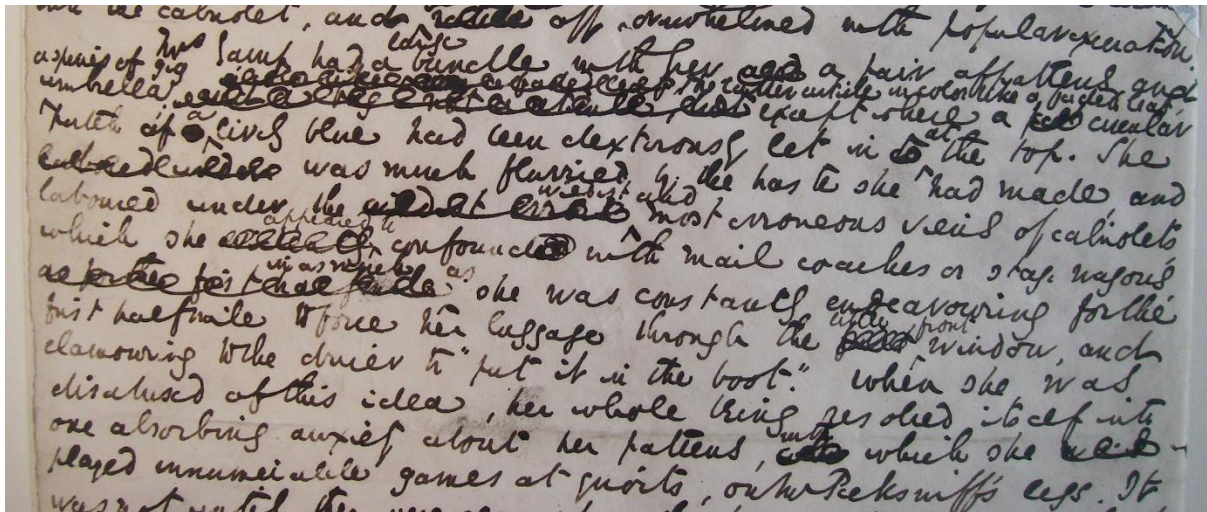


Figure 29: Martin Chuzzlewit Manuscript, Chapter Nineteen, Vol.4, p.380. ©National Art Library

John Bowen writes about Dickens's umbrellas in his chapter in *Dickens's Style*, that 'Umbrellas often stage in Dickens's work, little performances, theatres of absence and presence'.<sup>294</sup> Within this first appearance of Sairey Gamp's umbrella, Dickens is, in essence writing a new character who will have its own 'performances' and 'presence' in the upcoming novel. Where Dickens has little trouble describing Gamp but has trouble describing the umbrella, this is because he is in essence describing two characters as one.

Mrs Gamp and her umbrella are initially described as two entities but they become so referential that they become inseparable. Both Mrs Gamp and her umbrella can signify alone but their characters are strongest when placed together.

<sup>294</sup> Bowen, p.28

Later in the novel, Sairey Gamp is introduced in Chapter Forty to Tom and Ruth Pinch by first revealing and describing the umbrella. In this scene, seen in Figure 30, Mrs Gamp's name is not given until the next page of manuscript, nearly a page later as though a surprise, 'By this time, Mrs Gamp (for it was no other than that experienced practitioner)'.<sup>295</sup> The umbrella is written as though an independent being but comes to represent Mrs Gamp so much that Gamp is identified by it. This symbiotic relationship between a character and her prop echoes the symbiosis of Dickens and his characters.

In the manuscript, we see that again Dickens has edited and corrected these lines concerning Gamp's umbrella. As Dickens wrote in an article 'Please to Leave Your Umbrella' in *Household Words* in May 1858 and to which John Bowen refers, 'Dickens identifies the loss of memory, of knowledge and of the ability to make aesthetic judgements with the handing over of one's umbrella. If one hands over an umbrella in that essay, one hands over with it the most prized and intimate sense of self'.<sup>296</sup> In this sense, though Dickens seems to write the two in different ways, he still uses the umbrella as an intimate aspect of Gamp's self. One in which, were she to lose it, she may not have had the lasting impression in cultural memory that she has had.

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<sup>295</sup> MC, p.603.

<sup>296</sup> Bowen, p.29.



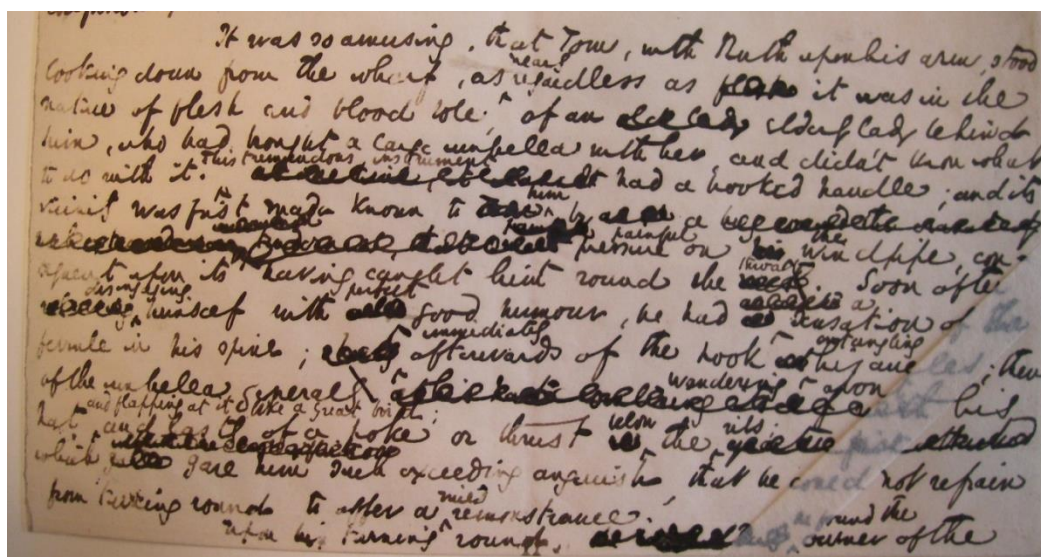


Figure 30: Martin Chuzzlewit Manuscript, Chapter Forty, Vol.6, p.195. ©National Art Library

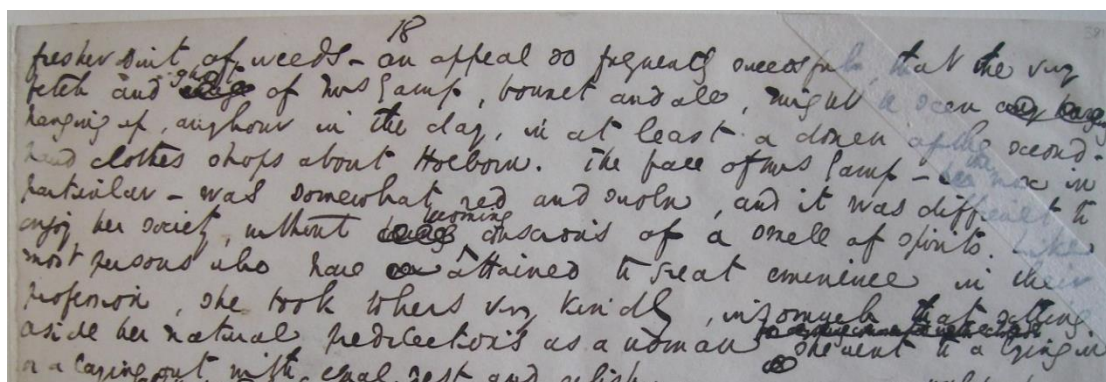


Figure 31: Martin Chuzzlewit Manuscript, Chapter Nineteen, Vol.4, p.381. ©National Art Library

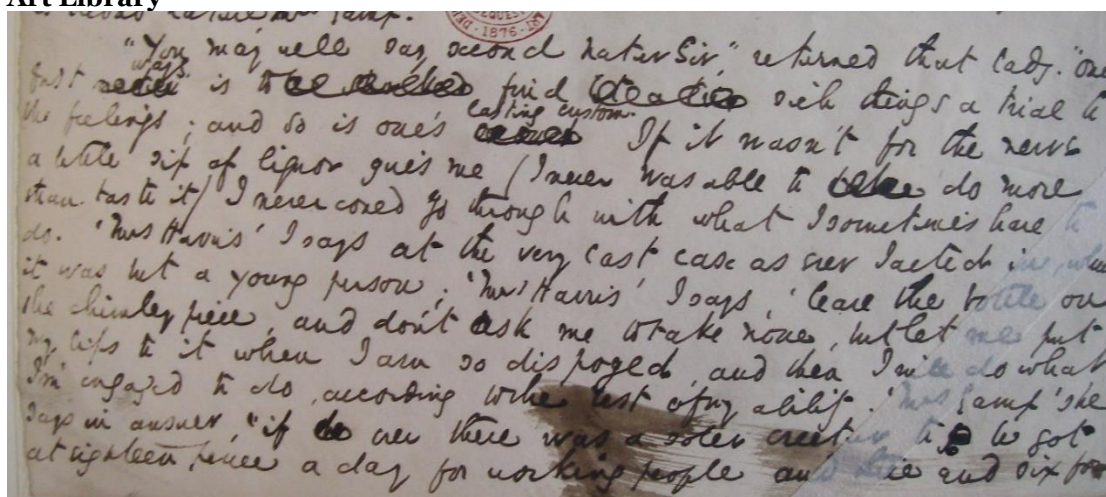


Figure 32: Martin Chuzzlewit Manuscript, Chapter Nineteen, Vol.4, p.381. ©National Art Library

While Mrs Gamp's iconic umbrella may have posed some problems, Dickens had little trouble visualising and describing Mrs Gamp or her manner of speech. In Figure 31 and Figure 32, we see two selections from page 381 of the manuscript where Dickens is describing Mrs Gamp's look and predilection for spirits as well as the first time we properly hear her speak, referencing Mrs Harris.

Mrs Gamp's manner of talking has become as recognisable to Dickens's readers as Sam Weller's. Sylvère Monod writes of Mrs Gamp's speech as 'Gampese' and that it is so memorable because it is, unlike many of Dickens's characters' dialects, unique. He writes:

it is true that Gampese is phonetically and grammatically unique, though not entirely coherent. In the first place, Mrs Gamp's English comprises a number of what might be called ordinary peculiarities by which are meant features common in lower-class English or specifically cockney forms.<sup>297</sup>

Beyond the character herself, Dickens was attached to Mrs Gamp's speech. As late in his life as 1868 and 1869, Dickens was still writing in his letters with her dialect. Dickens wrote, both times, to Frederic Ouvry, and quoted Mrs Gamp; 'I admit the soft impeachment concerning Mrs. Gamp. I like my payments to be made reg'lar, and I likewise likes my publisher to draw it mild'.<sup>298</sup>

Mrs Gamp is now remembered as one of Dickens's best comedic characters. Though likeable in her comedic qualities, Mrs Gamp was unapologetically negative in her portrayal of certain nurses who took advantage of their clients. But Dickens did not change his depiction of her. Dickens did however change another of his characters of whom someone complained.

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<sup>297</sup> Monod, p.59.

<sup>298</sup> *Letters*, Vol.12, p.400

### 3.2.3. Miss Mowcher: Dickens changes his plans

In the case of Miss Mowcher in *DC*, Dickens received a letter from Miss Jane Seymour Hill complaining of the way in which Dickens had written a character who was clearly based on herself. Although only present in three chapters of *DC*, Miss Mowcher is one of Dickens's minor characters who has intrigued readers, not least because she is one of the only characters to whom Dickens actually changed his plans after hearing complaints from a reader.

Virginia Woolf chose Miss Mowcher as an example of Dickens's memorable characters:

Dickens made his books blaze up, not by tightening the plot or sharpening the wit, but by throwing another handful of people in the fire. The interest flags and he creates Miss Mowcher, completely alive, equipped in every detail as if she were to play a great part in the story, whereas once the dull stretch of road is passed by her help, she disappears; she is needed no longer.<sup>299</sup>

Woolf is highlighting Dickens's ability to use character, however minor, to reignite interest in a story. Woolf also mentions a problematic aspect of Miss Mowcher, that of the balance between her character and her importance to plot.

Later in his career, Dickens did soften the character of Harold Skimpole after his friend Leigh Hunt complained that the character was too like and too defamatory towards himself; however Dickens did not alter the fundamental plan for Skimpole.<sup>300</sup> In fact, while Dickens changed the character's name to Harold from

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<sup>299</sup> Eigner, p.89.

<sup>300</sup> Dickens wrote to Forster about changing Skimpole, 'I have again gone over every part of it very carefully, and I think I have made it much less like. I have also changed Leonard to Harold. I have no right to give Hunt pain, and I am so bent upon not doing it that I wish you would look at all the proof once more, and indicate any particular place in which you feel I particularly like. Whereupon I will alter that place' (*Letters*, Vol.6, p.628). Even though Dickens did soften the description and change the name, and kept insisting, even to Hunt that the character was not meant as a portrait (*Letters*, Vol.7, p.460), he still wrote to Mrs Richard Watson in September of 1853, the month when the final number of *BH* was published, that:

I suppose he is the most exact portrait that ever was painted in words! I have very seldom, if ever, done such a thing. But the likeness is astonishing. I don't think he could possibly be more like himself. It is so awfully true, that I make a bargain with myself 'never to do so, any



Leonard, the character still comes across as quite a negative character. Dickens did not alter the character fundamentally.

Dickens did however, consciously change the intended direction of Miss Mowcher. *DC* is known as one of Dickens's favourite<sup>301</sup> novels and the one he found easiest to write; 'Copperfield half done. I feel, thank God, quite confident in the story. I have a move in it ready for this month; another for next; and another for the next'.<sup>302</sup>

However, Dickens needed to adjust his plans when he received a letter from a Miss Jane Seymour Hill who was unhappy with the defamation of her character in the form of Miss Mowcher. Miss Hill, who was a professional manicurist and chiropodist felt that the physical attributes and job description of Miss Mowcher were similar enough to herself that others would assume the 'volatile' personality traits and gossiping nature of Miss Mowcher to be similar to Miss Hill as well. Clearly Miss Hill felt that the impact of Dickens's writing within certain circles and spheres of influence would be enough to effectively poison her own public character. Dickens responded to Miss Hill's anxious letter thus:

I am most exceedingly and unfeignedly sorry to receive your letter and to have been the unfortunate occasion of giving you a moment's distress. I am bound to admit that in the character to which I take it for granted you refer, I have yielded to several little recollections of your general manner but I assure you that the original of a great portion of that character is well known to me and to several friends of mine and is wholly removed from you and a very different person. [...] I assure you that I had no idea of mixing you up with it further than by a whimsical shadowy possibility of association that I thought might be even amusing and serviceable to you rather than the reverse. [...] If I had the least thought of presenting you personally in my book I could have had your

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more'. There is not an atom of exaggeration or suppression. It is an absolute reproduction of a real man. Of course I have been careful to keep the outward figure away from the fact; but in all else it is the Life itself. This in confidential reply to your enquiry. (*Letters*, Vol.7, p.154). Thus, though Dickens altered the character slightly, he still admitted to keeping the character as an exact portrait of Hunt.

<sup>301</sup> Kate Douglas Wiggin remembers talking to Dickens about *DC*. When she said that it was her favourite, Dickens replied, 'I am glad that you like Davy, so do I- I like it best, too!' (Collins, Vol.1, p.171).

<sup>302</sup> *Letters*, Vol.5, p.551.

portrait drawn any morning in the week and put here. [...] I would alter the whole design of the character and remove it, in its progress, from the possibility of that bad construction to which you hint. I am quite serious in this. I do not mean it to be a very good character now, but I will make it so, and oblige the Reader to hold it in a pleasant remembrance- if that will give you any relief from this- by me quite unexpected and unforeseen distress.<sup>303</sup>

Dickens's profuse apology is perhaps a little excessive suggesting a modicum of sarcasm on his part. He at once suggests that aspects of Miss Hill are knowingly mirrored in Miss Mowcher at the same time as stating that the 'original' of Miss Mowcher is someone else entirely. Dickens then suggests that his characters in general might be 'recognised' in the streets since Dickens unknowingly portrays any of the myriad faces he sees in the streets of London. This letter then, while rife with expressions of the deepest apology, also reads as a defence of his writing and inspiration. Miss Hill could easily have been any one of the anonymous people from the streets of London that end up portrayed in his characters and, if it were so Dickens himself would not be at fault. Is he then suggesting his own lack of control over his own characters within this veiled defence?

Some degree of authorial control may be suggested when Dickens writes, 'I do not mean it to be a very good character now, but I will make it so,' suggesting his intention for the character was its design and should he wish to change it, he can. However, as we will see within the actual changing of the character, Dickens not only struggled (as he mentions in a letter to Angela Burdett Coutts) but ended up writing two different characters within the one name of Miss Mowcher. The changed character altered from Dickens's original plan is so different from the original appearance that the two create a dialogue of character modification within the novel, becoming at once an incursion of the 'real' world onto Dickens's imaginary landscape and an overt commentary on his writing.

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<sup>303</sup> *Letters*, Vol.5 p.674-675

On first meeting Miss Mowcher, David describes the character before him in fairly unattractive terms. Miss Mowcher is described as ‘waddling’ and ‘pursy’ of about forty or forty-five years old and with ‘roguish’ eyes. During her visit with David and Steerforth, Miss Mowcher continuously gossips about other customers of hers and known personages. She teases Steerforth about his being a ‘naughty boy.’ The scene is an altogether odd interlude and succeeds in advancing the story only in so much as Steerforth briefly refers to Em’ly as a beautiful girl in town when Miss Mowcher claims not to have seen any. David is left intrigued by her and asks Steerforth about her character, to which he does not reply. All in all, there is no assumption that Miss Mowcher will return to the story or that she could or would play any necessary part for good or ill in the rest of the plot.

In the working notes Miss Mowcher appears on the page headed for the eighth number, Chapter Twenty-Two.<sup>304</sup> On the right hand side of the page, which is where Dickens details plot particulars, Miss Mowcher’s name is simply written with a double underline. On the left side of the page where Dickens lists characters to be included, Miss Mowcher is given three alternative names: Miss Croodledey, Miss Croodledy, and Miss Croodlejum. There is no indication of why Dickens changed his mind from these other names or when since on the first appearance of Miss Mowcher in the manuscript, her name is Miss Mowcher with no sign of changes.<sup>305</sup>

Miss Mowcher next appears only two pages later in the working notes for *DC* for the tenth number of the novel, next to Chapter Twenty-Eight; Dickens notes simply ‘qy Miss Mowcher? Impossible – Try next time’.<sup>306</sup> Miss Mowcher’s first appearance in Chapter Twenty-Two was published in the eighth number in December of 1849. As early as the 18<sup>th</sup> of the month, Dickens was already writing his

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<sup>304</sup> Dickens, *Working Notes*, p.156.

<sup>305</sup> National Art Library (Great Britain). Manuscript. MSL/1876/Forster/161. Vol. 4, p.237.

<sup>306</sup> Dickens, *Working Notes*, p.160.

apology and reply to Miss Hill. However, he knew that he would be unable to immediately alter the character as he said to Robert Rogers on the matter:

I must beg you to understand that it can only be made, in the natural progress and current of the story. Even if the next number were not already in the Press, it would be impossible to be made there, because the character is not introduced, and the course of the tale is not at all in that direction.<sup>307</sup>

If it was true that the ninth number of the novel was already at the press, perhaps this is why Dickens queries Miss Mowcher in the notes for the tenth number, even though he knows the timing in the story is not quite right. On the next page, listing the notes for the eleventh number, Miss Mowcher's name again appears but underlined with '✓ Yes'.<sup>308</sup>

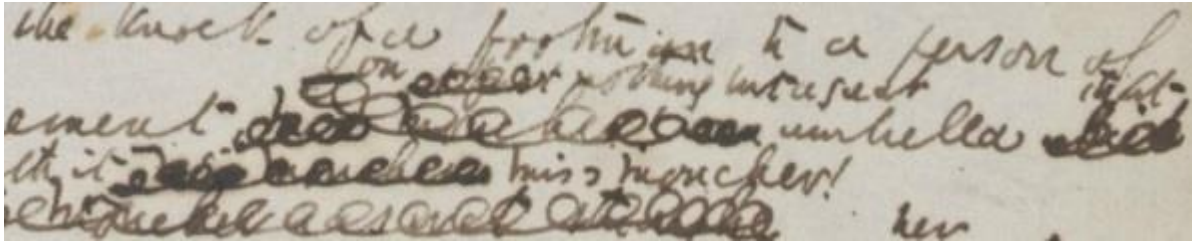
Dickens thus begins to make good his alteration of Miss Mowcher in Chapter Thirty-Two. Writing on the 12<sup>th</sup> February of 1850 to Angela Burdett Coutts, Dickens says, 'I am at present repairing Miss Mowcher's injury- with a very bad grace, and in a very ill humour.'<sup>309</sup> To be published the next month, Miss Mowcher appears in just one chapter of the eleventh number but the writing of this is clearly irksome enough for Dickens to write of it to his friends. Indeed, the first appearance near the bottom of the fourth page of the MS for number eleven of Miss Mowcher has many cross-outs and edits; in Figure 33 we can see an example of the trouble Dickens had with finding the right words to describe Miss Mowcher's reappearance. But Dickens's edits here are not the only difference to Miss Mowcher in the manuscript of Chapters Twenty-Two and Thirty-Two.

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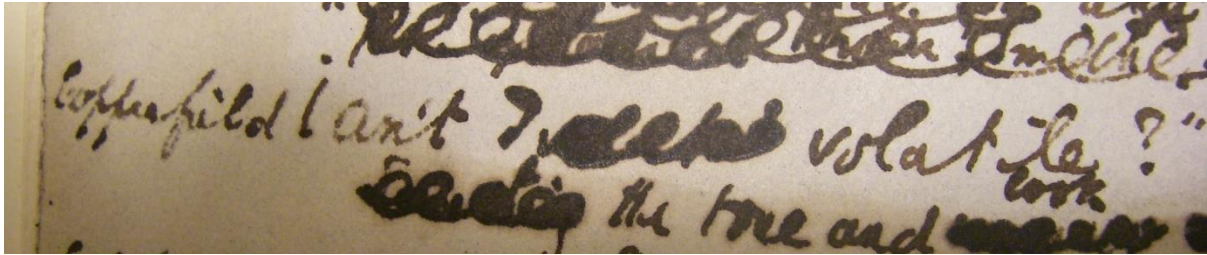
<sup>307</sup> *Letters*, Vol.5, p.676-677.

<sup>308</sup> Dickens, *Working Notes*, p.162

<sup>309</sup> *Letters* vol.6 p.35.



**Figure 33: *David Copperfield* Manuscript, Chapter Twenty-Two, Vol.4, p.327. © National Art Library.**



**Figure 34: *David Copperfield* Manuscript, Chapter Twenty-Two, Vol.4, p.239. ©National Art Library**

Where before we saw Dickens describe Miss Mowcher in negative terms, on her reappearance Miss Mowcher is instantly transformed. Before David even opens the door to her, he notes that the 'tap' on the door was 'as if it were given by a child'.<sup>310</sup> When she is revealed, David notes other differences in her appearance:

I might not have been prepared to give the little creature a very kind reception, if [...] she had shown me the 'volatile' expression of face which had made so great an impression on me at our first and last meeting. But her face, as she turned it up to mine, was so earnest and [...] she wrung her little hands in such an afflicted manner; that I rather inclined towards her.<sup>311</sup>

David is not only noting that Miss Mowcher's appearance and demeanour have changed from their last meeting, but in doing so, is also allowing Dickens to emphasise to the reader before Miss Mowcher has even said a word that her character has changed. The result is a very different character to the one which gossiped and repeated 'Ain't I volatile' at least four times.<sup>312</sup>

<sup>310</sup> DC, p.426.

<sup>311</sup> DC, p.426.

<sup>312</sup> DC, p.309.

Dickens does not stop there in ‘mending’ the character of Miss Mowcher. Instead of the ‘waddling’ dwarf<sup>313</sup> of Chapter Twenty-Two, Miss Mowcher is instead described as a ‘large doll’<sup>314</sup> implying her once grotesque strangeness is now endearing and the phrase ‘poor little’ is repeatedly used to describe aspects of her person.<sup>315</sup> Instead of gossiping, Miss Mowcher gives David an impassioned speech about the hardships she has faced in her life as perhaps a reason for any faults she may have. She is speaking of herself, in personal and emotional language instead of the distanced narrative of a third person account in her earlier gossiping. Knowing the background of her character’s creation and progression, it is interesting that Miss Mowcher’s words almost echo Dickens’s own treatment of the character:

If there are people so unreflecting or so cruel, as to make a jest of me, what is left for me to do but to make a jest of myself, them, and everything? If I do so, for the time, whose fault is that? Mine? [...] If I am a plaything for you giants, be gentle with me.<sup>316</sup>

The ‘I’ Dickens speaks of could be both himself as an author and a created character, the ‘plaything’ of authors. When Miss Mowcher speaks of being made a jest of, perhaps Dickens is again apologising to Miss Hill but at the same time assuaging himself of any guilt since he too is made jest of as a public figure and it is hardly his fault if his characters are taken out of the context of their stories.

In another edit, Dickens makes Miss Mowcher’s final guilty exclamation ‘was too late!’ to ‘Oh Oh Oh! Too late!’, see below in Figure 35.<sup>317</sup> The change exaggerates again the imposition of a purposefully sympathetic character onto a previously created character. The over-exclamation serves to enhance Miss Mowcher’s sorrow and regret in her earlier actions, and likewise Dickens’s earlier writing.

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<sup>313</sup> *DC*, p.304.

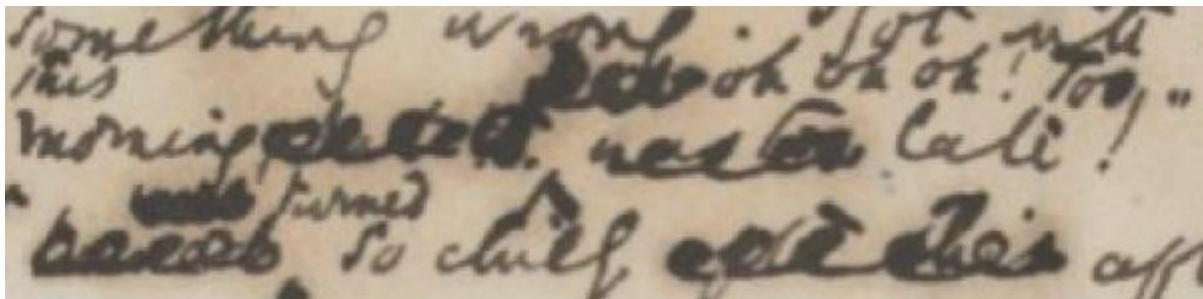
<sup>314</sup> *DC*, p.429.

<sup>315</sup> *DC*, p.429.

<sup>316</sup> *DC*, p.428.

<sup>317</sup> National Art Library (Great Britain). Manuscript. MSL/1876/Forster/161. p.563

These two chapters, Chapters Twenty-Two and Thirty-Two, are the only two chapters in which Miss Mowcher herself appears. One final time, in Chapter Sixty-One, David hears an account of Miss Mowcher; he is told how she was instrumental in the capture of Littimer by tripping him and holding onto him during his attempted flight from arrest.<sup>318</sup> The account is quite brief but important in furthering Miss Mowcher's absolution. Unlike Miss Mowcher's appearance in the manuscript pages of Chapter Thirty-Two, the manuscript pages of Chapter Sixty-One are in a more slanted hand over increasingly slanted lines. These characteristics suggest Dickens wrote this section quickly and with little regard to legibility and neatness across the page. In comparison to the slant of word and line in Figure 33 and Figure 35, Figure 36 shows a selection of the few lines containing the account of Miss Mowcher's heroism in Chapter Sixty-One.



**Figure 35:** *David Copperfield* Manuscript, Chapter Thirty-Two, p.564 ©National Art Library.

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<sup>318</sup> DC, p.799.

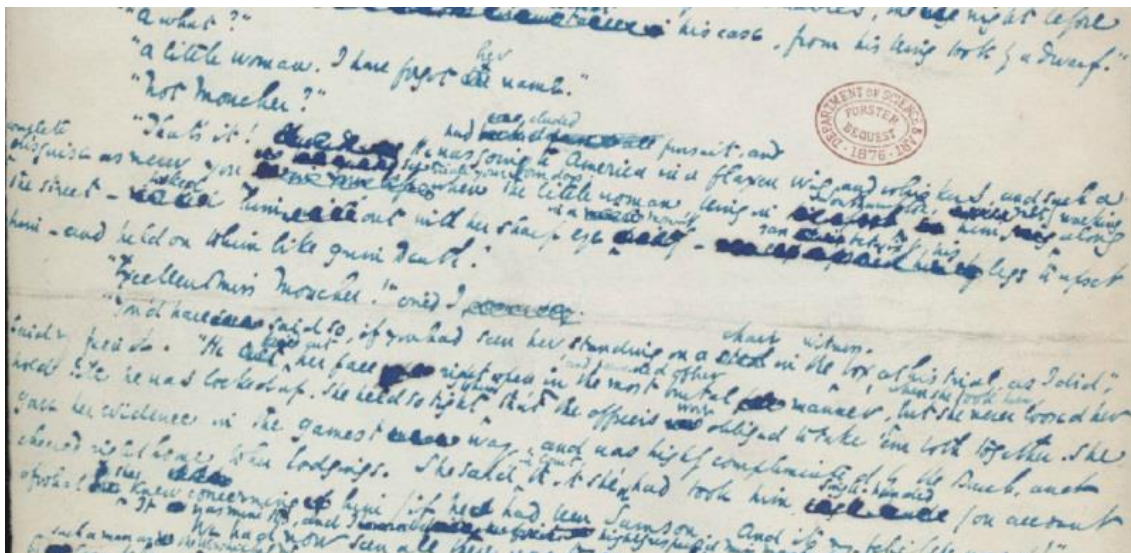


Figure 36: *David Copperfield* Manuscript, Chapter Sixty-One, p.564. © National Art Library.

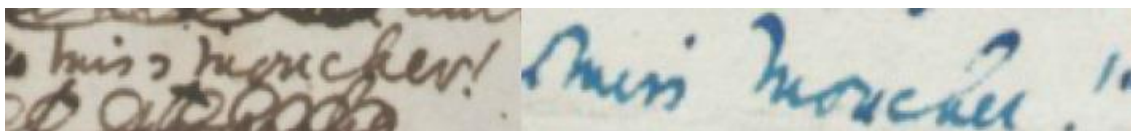


Figure 37: Inset from p.20 and p.564. *David Copperfield* Manuscript ©National Art Library

A side by side comparison of Miss Mowcher's name in Figure 37 from Chapter Thirty-Two and Chapter Sixty-One shows the immediate difference in Dickens's writing of these two chapters. Shown at the same magnitude of 300% of the original, the later writing is both larger in letter and has greater space between words and symbols. The earlier example is, granted, an edit so the difference in size might perhaps be argued away but the difference in style is undoubtedly indicative of a difference in writing speed and/or temperament. From an archival standpoint:

more so than the actual words and revisions, this palaeographical evidence provides information about the dynamics of composition. The way in which the hand moves across the page and the variations this produces [...] is indicative of the creative industry that drives the writing.<sup>319</sup>

<sup>319</sup> Van Mierlo, p.17.



How Dickens wrote, how he viewed his writing, and how he viewed his characters after writing are all importance considerations when trying to understand his style of authorship.

In these selections about Miss Mowcher, we have evidence of Dickens listening to a reader and altering his character. This ultimately results in Dickens writing two different Miss Mowchers, his original and the amended one. The change in the character does not flow properly because the impetus for the change did not come from Dickens himself but from an external force. This is further proved by the fact that the ‘easiest’ part of Miss Mowcher to write was the second-hand account of her in the final part of the novel.

While Dickens’s writing was, for the most part, a private action, in the next section I will look at how Dickens brought this ‘private’ relationship with his characters into the public arena through his performance of character in his public readings.

### **3.3. Dickens and Performing Character**

Dickens was able to speak of his characters in letters to friends and readers, and respond to critics in the prefaces of his published works and by changing characters as he wrote them. However, it was not until Dickens began reading his works in public that Dickens was truly able to show his reading public how he embodied his characters while writing. Dickens’s performance of his characters, both for audiences and to himself as he was writing, shows that Dickens brought his characters to life before outside of the written page. It is for this reason that Dickens’s characters were so easily brought beyond their novels by Dickens and his readers.

One of the most famous memories recorded of Dickens's style of writing was from his daughter Mamie, remembered from a time when she was able to observe Dickens at work in his study:

I was lying on the sofa endeavouring to keep perfectly quiet, while my father wrote busily and rapidly at his desk, when he suddenly jumped from his chair and rushed to a mirror which hung near, and in which I could see the reflection of some extraordinary facial contortions which he was making. He returned rapidly to his desk, wrote furiously for a few moments, and then went again to the mirror. The facial pantomime was resumed, and then turning toward, but evidently not seeing, me, he began talking rapidly in a low voice. Ceasing this soon, however, he returned once more to his desk, where he remained silently writing until lunchtime. [...] he had thrown himself completely into the character that he was creating, and that for the time being he had not only lost sight of his surroundings, but had actually become in action, as in imagination, the creature of his pen.<sup>320</sup>

Henry Burnett, Dickens's brother-in-law, also remembered watching Dickens's facial features while he was writing:

It was interesting to watch, upon the sly, the mind and the muscles working (or, if you please, playing) in company, as new thoughts were being dropped upon the paper. And to note the working brow, the set mouth, with the tongue slightly pressed against the closed lips, as was his habit.<sup>321</sup>

Even John J. Sharp, the Postmaster of Rochester, remembers watching Dickens from a distance and being able to see the 'deep lines' of his face as he acted out his characters while writing, 'when walking by himself and unobserved, apparently acting some character, as you could see his face in constant motion'.<sup>322</sup>

These memories were brief intrusions into Dickens's usually private process of writing. They show Dickens in the act of bringing the characters in his brain into physical being through performance before writing them down. Rather than processing his characters from his imagination to the page, Dickens mediated them through physical presence. Because of this aspect of his writing process, his

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<sup>320</sup> Mamie Dickens, pp.28-29.

<sup>321</sup> Collins, Vol.1, p.22.

<sup>322</sup> Collins, Vol.2, p.274.

characters naturally retained that aspect of their existence that was separate from Dickens's internal processes. In other words, because they were real to Dickens, they became all the more real to his readers. As Malcolm Andrews writes, 'His fictional characters were alive to him, whether or not they had "originals", and they proved their vital existence as Dickens painstakingly impersonated them into life. [...] Dickens is simply transcribing what already exists'.<sup>323</sup> While Malcolm Andrews's book focuses a lot on Dickens's skill in mimicry as a foundation for his creation and performance of character, looking at Dickens's proclivity for performance as natural to Dickens's love of theatrics, I would rather say that this same performative aspect of Dickens's writing is founded in the characters themselves and Dickens's relationship to them rather than his relationship to the stage.

Because Dickens included performance in his writing, it was a natural step to adapt his writings for public readings. He brought this same performative aspect to his embodiment of character in the stage for his readers and many remember Dickens's reading because of the presence of his characters. Charles Kent remembers the phenomenon of knowing it was Dickens onstage but picturing the characters as they appeared rather than 'seeing' Dickens himself; this was especially poignant because Dickens did not employ costumes for his performances. Kent recalled, 'character after character appeared before us, living and breathing, in the flesh, as we looked and listened. It mattered nothing, just simply nothing, that the great author was there all the while before his audience in his own identity'.<sup>324</sup> Kent remembers being surprised that as he listened to Dickens read, Dickens himself seemed to disappear and instead, the stage was peopled by the characters brought to life:

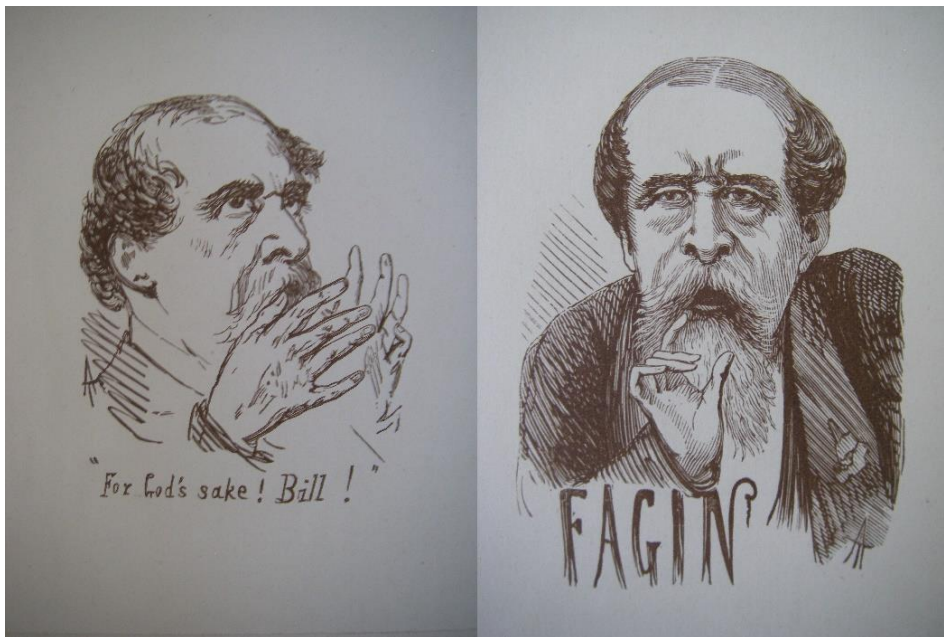
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<sup>323</sup> Malcolm Andrews, *Charles Dickens and His Performing Selves: Dickens and the Public Readings* (Oxford: Oxford University Publishing, 2006). p.101-103.

<sup>324</sup> Collins, Vol.2, p.244.

while he stood there unmistakably before his audience [...] his individuality, so to express it, altogether disappeared, and we saw before us instead, just as the case might happen to be, Mr. Pickwick, or Mrs. Gamp, or Dr. Marigold, or little Paul Dombey, or Mr. Squeers, or Sam Weller, or Mr. Peggotty, or some other of those immortal personages'.<sup>325</sup>

The same phenomenon is captured in an illustration of Dickens published in *Tinsley Magazine*, see in Figure 38. The artist has focused on capturing Dickens's facial expressions and hand gestures as he embodies Fagin and Nancy while performing 'Sikes and Nancy'.



**Figure 38: Studies of Dickens while reading Sikes and Nancy (1868?). Images© Charles Dickens Museum**

The fact that Dickens did not have an elaborate set design also emphasises the performance of the readings; 'No drapery conceals the table, whereby it is plain that Mr Dickens believes in expression of figure as well as of face'.<sup>326</sup> The anticipation was that because of the lack of set dressing, Dickens would be the main focus of the event and all of the action and performance would come from his face and body. This was

<sup>325</sup> Collins, Vol.2, p.245.

<sup>326</sup> Kate Field, *Pen Photographs of Charles Dickens's Readings, etc.* (London: British Library Historic Print Editions, 2014 [1868]). p.12.

undoubtedly true, with one memory being ‘Those marvellous characters of his come forth, one by one, real personages, as if their original creator had breathed new life into them. You shut up your eyes & there before you know are Pecksniff, & Sairey Gamp, Sam Weller & Dick Swiveller & all the rest’.<sup>327</sup> The ‘Final Verdict’ written in *Pen Photographs* quotes, ‘[Dickens] “costumes his mind,” as Carlyle once declared, and without change of scene presents a repertoire of eighty-six characters!’<sup>328</sup>

Because there were so many readings given by Dickens, and so many characters he portrayed, I would briefly like to look at Sairey Gamp one last time for a closer examination of Dickens and his performances. The reading ‘Mrs Gamp’ is different from all of Dickens’s other readings because its foundation is solely character rather than plot. Even the most controversial of Dickens’s readings, ‘Sikes and Nancy’, although titled with characters names, is based around a condensed incident in *OT* rather than a conglomeration of quotations and scenes involving the two characters.

Looking at Dickens’s prompt copy of ‘Mrs Gamp’, one of the most obvious edits Dickens made was to eliminate passages which did not concern Sairey Gamp. For example, at the very beginning of the reading, when Pecksniff visits Holborn to employ Gamp, an entire passage over page sixty-three and sixty-four about the bird-fancier below Gamp’s apartment is crossed out and shaded in.<sup>329</sup> The same deletion happens again later with a passage about Mr Mould.

Fields’s *Pen Photographs* in fact criticises ‘Mrs Gamp’ for restricting the incidents of the novel, ‘we most certainly wish there was more, and look upon it as an aggravation’.<sup>330</sup> That being said, the review continues to say that it only criticises

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<sup>327</sup> Collins, Vol2, p.300.

<sup>328</sup> Field, p.56.

<sup>329</sup> Charles Dickens, *Mrs Gamp: A Facsimile of the Author's Prompt Copy*, ed. by John D. Gordan and Monica Dickens (New York: New York Public Library, 1956). p.23.

<sup>330</sup> Field, p.47.

‘Mrs Gamp’ because there is not enough of it, that the audience would have been receptive to all of *MC*. In fact, the aspect of the reading which Field’s book applauds the most is Sairey Gamp herself and that most of the other characters in the pieces are not as thoroughly fleshed out (which would be true as the reading was extracted from only parts of *MC* concerning Gamp). Philip Collins’s edited collection of Dickens’s readings states ‘there was much praise for his [Dickens’s] facial expressions as Mrs Gamp and his voice for her, “snuffy, husky, unctuous, the voice of a fat old woman”’.<sup>331</sup>

But it was not just Mrs Gamp’s voice at which Dickens excelled. Field’s book recalls, ‘The expression of her glowing face, at this juncture, defies language’.<sup>332</sup> This note from Field is even more interesting given that, as describing Gamp’s voice and face, Field is speaking of Gamp herself rather than speaking of Dickens’s face as he read Sairey Gamp. In this review, Dickens is almost eliminated in the description of the characters on stage. It is only when describing the ‘inferior’ representations of Mr Mould and Pecksniff that Dickens reappears as the actor.<sup>333</sup>

In Dickens’s prompt copy, there are interesting examples of Dickens’s focus on the readings as performance rather than reading, particularly when it comes to dialogue. Many times throughout the novel, as in the examples of Figure 39 and Figure 40, Dickens has crossed out the manner of dialogue, how things are said, and who says them. These are aspects of the readings which Dickens has transformed into performance since the character and manner of speaking will come across in his performance and he will not need additional clues.

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<sup>331</sup> Charles Dickens, *Sikes and Nancy and Other Public Readings*, ed. by Philip Collins (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983). p.109.

<sup>332</sup> Field, p.51.

<sup>333</sup> Field, p.50.

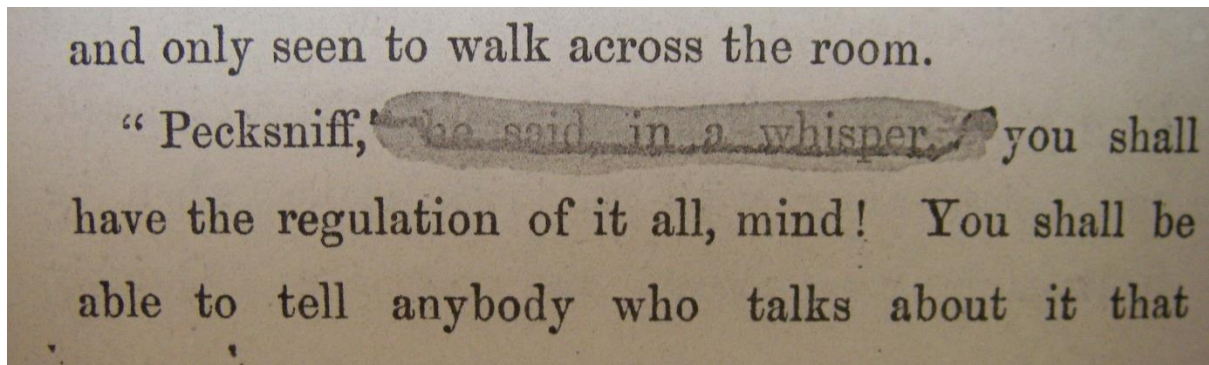


Figure 39: *Mrs Gamp*, Facsimile of Prompt Copy, pub. New York Public Library (1956), p.36.

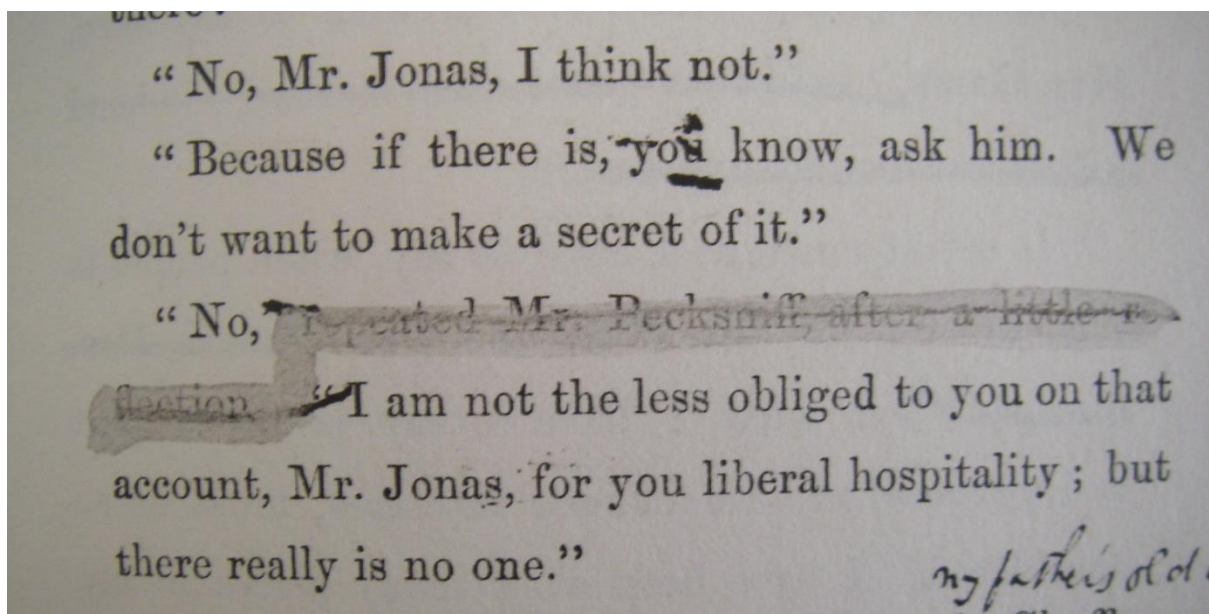


Figure 40: *Mrs Gamp*, Facsimile of Prompt Copy, pub. New York Public Library (1956), p.37.

Eleanor Christian remembers Dickens’s readings and the power of Dickens’s embodiment of character:

He identified himself completely with each character, seeming to enjoy the fun and sympathise with the pathos as if all was quite new to him. He held his audience absorbed in the recital, as his sonorous, emphatic tones (alternately ringing with power, or thrilling with tenderness).<sup>334</sup>

For the many instances of Dickens’s audience being affected by the readings and characters performed before them, Dickens was equally as affected.

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<sup>334</sup> Collins, Vol.1, p.41.

While he described the Copperfield reading as his favourite (as the novel was his favourite as well), Dickens often wrote to friends and family of the great reception of his comedic readings 'The Trial' (from *PP*) and 'Mrs Gamp'. To Georgina Hogarth he wrote, 'As to the Boots at night-and Mrs. Gamp too- it was just one roar with me and them. For they made me laugh so, that sometimes I could not compose my face to go on'.<sup>335</sup>

Dickens wrote to Frank Stone in 1859 about a recent reading where he performed 'Mrs Gamp', 'Mrs. Gamp then set in with a roar, which lasted until I had done. I think everybody for the first time forgot everything but the matter in hand. It was as fine an instance of thorough absorption in a fiction as any of us are likely to see ever again'.<sup>336</sup>

When first deciding whether or not to make public readings an aspect of his career, Dickens was concerned first and foremost with his relationship to his reading public. He wrote in a letter to F. M. Evans in 1858 when he was first beginning to perform:

Now, the question I want your opinion on, is this:-Assuming these hopes to be well-grounded, would such an [sic] use of the personal (I may almost say affectionate) relations which subsist between me and the public, and make my standing with them very peculiar, at all affect my position with them as a writer? Would it be likely to have any influence on my next book? If it had any influence at all, would it be likely to be of a weakening or a strengthening kind?<sup>337</sup>

Dickens was concerned not only with the reception of the work he would be performing, but also that there might be ill effects on any future publications. That Dickens was concerned with his position as a writer in addition to his relationship with his readers says much to how much emphasis he placed on his readers. What

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<sup>335</sup> Dickens *Letters* Vol.8, p.643.

<sup>336</sup> *Letters*, Vol.9, p.138.

<sup>337</sup> *Letters*, Vol.8, pp.532-533.



Dickens does not mention as a concern is the work itself; there is no hint of concern that his characters might not be presented well. This is because Dickens's own relationship with his characters both as a writer and as a performer was so strong that it could not be adversely affected by the public readings. In fact, what we find is that by giving an authorial example of his characters in performance, Dickens himself has illustrated that his characters can be brought off the page so well because they were alive already in his own mind.

### **3.4. Conclusion**

When looking at manuscripts as resources, Wim Van Mierlo writes, 'The challenges that archaeologists face when they interpret the past are similar to those encountered in the palaeographical analysis of modern manuscripts. [...] They are our only means of reclaiming the processes of creation from the past'.<sup>338</sup> In this chapter, I have attempted to recreate Dickens's relationships with his characters through both a palaeographic and a textual analysis of manuscripts, letters, recorded memories, and readings. As Harry Stones writes:

Dickens's working notes [and by extension his manuscripts] are, of course, a lode or source: [The working notes] can be used to verify a meaning, document an intention, underscore a motif, trace a genesis, buttress a reading, clarify a relationship, examine the creative process, or study Dickens's imagination.<sup>339</sup>

That Dickens imagined and wrote his characters as real beings is well documented. I hope to have shown that this very relationship with his characters was the impetus for the further afterlives of these characters created both by Dickens himself and by his readers.

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<sup>338</sup> Van Mierlo, p.17.

<sup>339</sup> Stone, p.xix.

From the conception of his characters, through their gestation and development and birth in their published works, Dickens's awareness of his own process of authorship was that of a father to his children. Time and time again, Dickens's characters resisted his ultimate control, whether making his daily writing difficult or resisting changes to character development. Once released to the reading public, Dickens's characters began lives of their own outside the influence of their 'father'. In the next two chapters, I will explore these afterlives.

I will end this chapter with one final memory of Dickens's public readings from Lady Ritchie. She remembered the vivid realness of Dickens's *Copperfield* reading, recalling the physical detail of the imaginary scenes which Dickens was able to call forth in the reading:

He seemed holding the great audience in some mysterious way from the empty stage. Quite immediately the story began: *Copperfield* and *Steerforth*, *Yarmouth* and the fishermen and *Peggotty*, and then the rising storm, all was there before us... It was not acting, it was not music, nor harmony of sound and colour, and yet I still have an impression of all these things as I think of that occasion. The lights shone from the fisherman's home; then after laughter terror fell, the storm rose; finally, we all were breathlessly watching from the shore, as (this I remember most vividly of all) a great wave seemed to fall splashing on to the platform from overhead, carrying away everything before it, and the boat and the figure of *Steerforth* in his red sailor's cap fighting for his life by the mast. Someone called out; was it Mr. Dickens himself who threw up his arm? <sup>340</sup>

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<sup>340</sup> Collins, Vol.1, p.179.

#### 4. 'Wanting More': Character and the Archontic Memory



**Figure 41: Still from *Oliver!*, dir. Carol Reed (1968). Image© Sony Pictures.**

The above image is taken from the last song, the reprise of 'Reviewing the Situation', in the 1968 film of Lionel Bart's *Oliver!*, a musical based on *OT*. In the scene, Fagin and Dodger come across one another in a deserted street after a chaotic mob has hounded them out of their thieves' lair and Bill Sikes has been hung after falling from a roof. The two characters, despite losing their home and network of thieves, band together and sing about the joys of villainy and setting up a new establishment while joyfully skipping off into the sunrise. Actor Ron Moody's portrayal of Fagin is arguably one of the most memorable film versions of a Dickens character.<sup>341</sup> Although in the original novel there is always a sympathetic lilt in the

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<sup>341</sup> Moody played Fagin first in the original West End production of *Oliver!*, then reprised the role for the 1968 film production and the subsequent Broadway production. As recently as 2010, five years before his death at 91, Moody was still associated with Fagin and performed 'Reviewing the Situation' and 'Pick a Pocket or Two' at the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration for *Oliver!*. Nick Smurthwaite, 'Obituary: Ron Moody', in *The Stage*

villain Fagin, it was Lionel Bart's singing and dancing Fagin that solidified the character as more an antihero than villain. When working on his adaptation of the novel, Lionel Bart directly stated, 'I wish Dodger and Fagin to be sympathetic characters'.<sup>342</sup> Actor Ron Moody agreed, saying in a 1983 interview, 'both he [Moody] and Bart "felt an obligation to get Fagin away from a viciously racial stereotype and instead make him what he really is- a crazy old Father Christmas gone wrong"'.<sup>343</sup>

In the novel, Fagin's end is the opposite of dancing off into the sunrise. In the final image of Fagin by Cruikshank in Figure 42, Fagin sits in his prison cell, condemned to hang. An almost identical tableau is given in the 1922 silent film version of *Oliver Twist* seen in Figure 43. The image of Fagin seated on a wooden bench in prison, with moonlight touching his face for the last time has been repeated many times in nearly every film version of *OT*<sup>344</sup>. However, it is Bart's optimistic Fagin that is perhaps the most remembered and it is the hopeful dancing into the sunset image of Fagin that lasts. In notes while working on the play script of *Oliver!* with director Peter Coe, despite Coe wanting to be more faithful to the original novel, Bart writes, '[I] [w]ill NOT have Fagin led away to prison. Establish that he has had a change of conscience early in the play. Therefore he has no introvert [sic] wickedness, but sincere like for Oliver.'<sup>345</sup> As Juliet John notes, 'As Fagin and the Dodger dance off into the sunset, we experience them as cartoon villains and do not guard our pockets'.<sup>346</sup>

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<<https://www.thestage.co.uk/features/obituaries/2015/obituary-ron-moody/>> [accessed 28 March 2016]

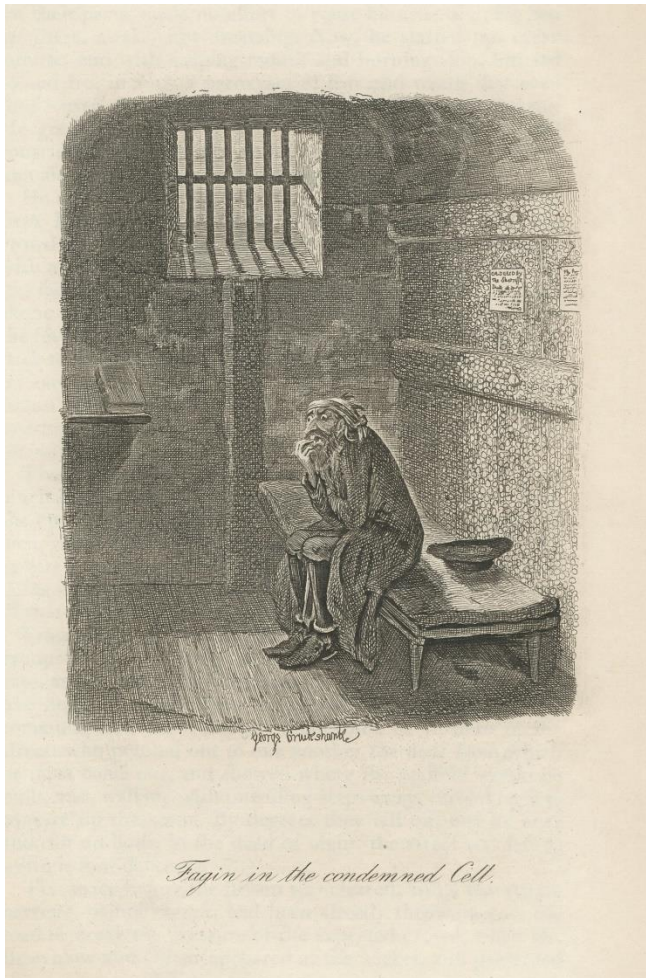
<sup>342</sup> Marc Napolitano, *Oliver!: A Dickensian Musical* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014). p.72.

<sup>343</sup> Quoted in Napolitano, p.98. Original Source: Morley, Sheridan. 'Archetype of the Genuine English Classic Musical.' *Times* December 14, 1983, p.9.

<sup>344</sup> Many adaptations which decide not to show Fagin in his cell still leave the last image of Fagin as him being arrested by Police and dragged off through the mob as in David Lean's 1948 film of *Oliver Twist*.

<sup>345</sup> Quoted in Napolitano, p.75. Original Source: Bart, Lionel. Notes on paste-up by Peter Coe, February 4 1960. Lionel Bart Foundation Archive.

<sup>346</sup> John, *Mass*, p.230.



**Figure 42: *Fagin in the Condemned Cell*, by George Cruikshank (1839). Image© Charles Dickens Museum.**



**Figure 43: Screen capture *Oliver Twist*, dir. Frank Lloyd (1922). Image© Jackie Coogan Productions**

Despite readers often knowing that not only does Fagin deserve to be held accountable in some way for his criminal actions, but that he is in fact hung at the end of the novel, the choice to keep Fagin's fate at least undecided<sup>347</sup> at the end of the story is a choice founded on an important aspect of how Dickens is adapted and remembered. What I will explore in this chapter is how Dickens's characters take on a life of their own in readers' imaginations and the collective accumulation of these various lives ultimately creates a dynamic archive of character.

Rather than viewing the act of adaptation from the point of view of the adaptor but from the point of view of the audience, I plan on proving that adaptations, both authorised and unauthorised, can contribute to the cultural memory of characters. Indeed, as John notes, 'It is arguable that adaptations of *Oliver Twist* have indeed had more impact on the public than Dickens's original novel'.<sup>348</sup> Adaptations are ultimately archontic in that they build upon one another to form a continuing archive of character rather than becoming a palimpsest.

Adaptive considerations such as the author/auteur relationship, issues of authenticity and copyright, fanfiction, and the dialogue between canon and popular culture can complicate cultural memory. However, in the case of Dickens, many of these discussions work together to support the ongoing afterlives of his characters.

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<sup>347</sup> Fagin and Dodger's ultimate 'ends' were constantly rewritten during the writing of the stage musical. One possible ending Bart considered was giving Fagin the job of taking care of the orphans in the workhouse, redeeming his criminal ways by honestly taking care of those who needed a 'good' father figure. Bart likewise considered this an ending for Dodger since he was adamant that they be given redemptive 'happy' endings. Napolitano discusses these and more rewrites in *Oliver!: A Dickensian Musical*. He writes, 'If the idea of Fagin as parish beadle is ridiculous, the idea of the Dodger filling that part seems even more outlandish.' (Napolitano, p.74). In the end, Bart's stage version of the musical is less optimistic than the film but nevertheless, beyond Fagin losing his criminal network and 'savings' he is still left a free man. Bart leaves Fagin wandering away (rather than dancing) into an uncertain future. However he still saw this as hopeful, 'Having learnt to live with this conscience in himself, and having his treasure chest taken away by the police he may even wander away to Irseal or somewhere-friendless' (quoted in Napolitano, p.75. Original source: Bart, Lionel. Notes on paste-up by Peter Coe, February 4 1960. Lionel Bart Foundation Archive. p.2).

<sup>348</sup> John, *Mass*, p.208.

#### 4.1. 'Dishonest Dullards': Dickens, Copyright, and Appropriation

Before looking at how Dickens's characters have been adapted, it is first important to position Dickens's own views on copyright and adaptation to orient ourselves to the place of the first 'plagiarisms' of Dickens's works. Dickens continuously tried to retain creative and editorial control over his creations through copyright legislation, 'authorisation', international publications, and even blatant name-calling. However, his characters and stories were adapted, staged, and re-issued despite his best efforts.

The year after publishing his first 'Sketch', Dickens was already being plagued by adaptations. In a letter to the Editor of *The Monthly Magazine*, Dickens writes that his objection to a theatrical adaptation of one of his sketches was mainly that he had planned on adapting it to the stage himself.<sup>349</sup> This argument was often the most successful in seeking to end theatrical plagiarism. Under the Maugham treatise of 1828, an 'abridgement or composition' publication was legal without authorisation from the original author.<sup>350</sup> A dramatization would be a 'new' enough work although still adapted from an original that an author would have no justification for legal action. However, if the author had planned to dramatise a work themselves, than any other dramatization would henceforth not be considered a 'new' work. It was not until 1867 with the *Wood v Boosey* case that a work could be considered both a 'new' work and an infringement on copyright.<sup>351</sup> Dickens did adapt one of his sketches for

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<sup>349</sup> Dickens writes, "I celebrated a christening a few months ago in the *Monthly*, and I find that Mr. Buckstone has officiated as self-elected godfather, and carried off my child to the Adelphi, for the purpose, probably, of fulfilling one of his sponsorial [sic] duties, viz., of teaching it the vulgar tongue. Now, as I claim an entire right to do 'what I like with my own', and as I contemplated a dramatic destination for my offspring, I must enter my protest against the kidnapping process..." (Dickens, Letter to the Editor of *The Monthly Magazine*, October 1834, Vol.1 p.42)

<sup>350</sup> Isabella Alexander, *Copyright Law and the Public Interest in the Nineteenth Century* (Oxford: Hart, 2010). p.188.

<sup>351</sup> Alexander, p.188.

the stage<sup>352</sup> and so we must assume that, while in the above case Dickens did not follow up on his claim, he was certainly not presenting an empty argument.

In 1838, after constantly dealing with unauthorised dramatisations and prose plagiarisms of *PP* and *OT*<sup>353</sup>, Dickens published a 'Proclamation' which denounced any attempts at copying or using his works for others' gain. This proclamation was published just before the commencement of publishing *NN* and has come to be known as the 'Nickleby Proclamation'. Even though it was only his third novel (*SBB* excluded) Dickens's stories were already favourites to dramatists and imitators. The notice was to 'some dishonest dullards, resident in the by-streets and cellars of this town, impose[ing] upon the unwary and credulous, by producing cheap and wretched imitations of our delectable works.'<sup>354</sup> Dickens also insults these plagiarists further, claiming 'their mental smallness', and that they are '[vermin] not worth the killing for the sake of their carcasses', and 'kennel pirates [not] worth the powder and shot of the law'.<sup>355</sup> He continues with a threat directed to the actual pirates that he has 'devised a mode of execution for them, so summary and terrible'.<sup>356</sup> While Dickens's 'Proclamation' did serve its purpose to publically denounce imitations and unauthorised adaptations, it did not curtail any and of course did nothing to legally restrict unauthorised adaptations or republications.

Dickens had even more copyright headaches in 1842 when he travelled to America. If the copyright laws in England were abstract enough to prevent many plagiarisms of his works, the international copyright laws of the time were even more

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<sup>352</sup> Dickens notably adapted one of his sketches from what would become *SBB* for the theatre. *The Strange Gentleman* was dramatized from the sketch 'The Great Winglebury Duel' in 1836. Dickens later disavowed this play along with *The Village Coquettes* which was written and produced at the same time.

<sup>353</sup> Some of these plagiarisms are *The Penny Pickwick*, *The Posthumous Papers of the Cadger's Club*, *The Peregrinations of Pickwick*, *Oliver Twiss*, and others.

<sup>354</sup> Charles Dickens, *Proclamation*. (1838) .

<sup>355</sup> *Proclamation*. (1838).

<sup>356</sup> *Proclamation*. (1838).



lacking. While on his first trip to America, Dickens openly spoke against the lack of international copyright. In his letters home during his time in America, Dickens consistently rails against the 'injustice' of not having any copyright protection in the States. To John Pendleton Kennedy in April of 1842, Dickens writes:

That I have always felt, and do always feel, so keenly, the outrage which the existing Piracy inflicts upon its writers- the flagrant injustice which Law Makers suffer to be committed upon them as though the exercise of the highest gifts of the Creator, of right entailed upon a man, heavy pains and penalties, and put him beyond the pale of Congressional and Senatorial sympathies- that I cannot, though I try ever so hard, discuss the question as one of expediency, or reason it as one of National profit and loss. [...] I made a few sketches for your report, clearly shewing as all we authors know perfectly well- that under an International Copyright Law, popular books would be no dearer than they are now.<sup>357</sup>

The argument Dickens was trying to dispel in America was that copyright restrictions would make literature cost more and that any rise in the price of books would mean disaster to the printing industry as Americans would no longer be able to afford to buy books. Robert McParland writes of the American angle in *Charles Dickens's American Audience*, claiming "The reprinting of foreign texts without payment to foreign authors was described as a way of protecting American business interests".<sup>358</sup> To American companies, the American printing industry was a nationalist concern, whether or not the texts they were printing came from foreign or domestic authors.

The other argument Dickens faced in America concerned his fame. The argument was that were it not for the unrestricted publication of international books, Dickens's works would not be as widely read.<sup>359</sup> Dickens was told that he should, in fact, be grateful for lack of copyright and that pecuniary remuneration should not be

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<sup>357</sup> *Letters*, Vol.3, pp.221-222.

<sup>358</sup> McParland, p.45.

<sup>359</sup> An article in *The New World* states "Has Mr. Dickens yet to learn that to the very absence of such a law as he advocates, he is mainly indebted for his widespread popularity in this country? To that class of his readers- the dwellers in log cabins [mentioned by Dickens in his Boston speech], in our back settlements- whose good opinion, he says, is dearer to him than gold, his name would hardly have been known had international copy-right law been in existence." (Quoted in *Letters*, Vol.3, p.60f)

weighed up against renown. Dickens writes to Forster in 1842 in scathingly sarcastic tones of this attitude of the Americans:

The man's read in America! The Americans like him! They are glad to see him when he comes here! They flock about him, and tell him that they are grateful to him for spirits in sickness; for many hours of delight in health; for a hundred fanciful associations which are constantly interchanged between themselves, and their wives and children at home! It is nothing that all this takes place in countries where he is paid: it is nothing that he has won fame for himself elsewhere, and profit too. The Americans read him: the free, enlightened, independent Americans; and what more would he have? Here's reward enough for any man.<sup>360</sup>

Just two days earlier, Dickens wrote to Henry Austin, again about his ire at not being financially compensated for the vast publication of his works in America:

Is it not a horrible thing that scoundrel-booksellers should grow rich here from publishing books, the authors of which do not reap one farthing from their issue, by scores of thousands? [...] Is it tolerable that besides being robbed and rifled, an author should be forced to appear in any form- in any vulgar dress- in any atrocious company- that he should have no choice of his audience- no control over his own distorted text.<sup>361</sup>

Dickens was tiring of being hounded by fans of his works after four months of being in America and felt it unjust that he should have so little privacy yet be reaping no rewards from the publications of his works that the American fans were clearly enjoying.

His sentiments against the practice of piracy in the American press were so great in fact, that he proclaimed he would never settle a publishing deal with an American publisher again, oddly restricting his 'legal' publishing rights in a protest against the 'illegal' practices.<sup>362</sup> He did however end up backtracking on this position and making a deal with J. T. Fields for exclusive publishing 'rights' in America; and,

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<sup>360</sup> *Letters*, Vol.3, pp.231-232

<sup>361</sup> *Letters*, Vol.3, p.230.

<sup>362</sup> Dickens wrote publically in a printed circular to the British Authors and Journals that, 'For myself, I have resolved that I will never from this time enter into any negotiation with any person for the transmission, across the Atlantic, of early proofs of anything [sic] I may write; and that I will forego all profit derivable from such a source.' [*Letters*, Vol.3, pp.257-258]

by his second trip to the States in 1867, Dickens was more concerned with the reception of his reading tour than with copyright. In fact, in 1867, Dickens wrote to Fields claiming he never publically denounced American plagiarists in a derogatory way and declared how many friends he had in America and how much he loved the country.<sup>363</sup>

When Dickens returned to England, he kept lobbying for International Copyright for a time. While he seemed unable to put a stop to the number of dramatized versions of his works, Dickens did manage to halt publication of a plagiarised edition of *A Christmas Carol*<sup>364</sup>. In a letter to Thomas Mitton in January 1844, Dickens mentions the injunction against the *Carol* copy; 'It has been most brilliantly and promptly done. I am glad to find that the Publishers are frightened'.<sup>365</sup> With Dickens pursuing the *Carol* plagiarists so ruthlessly and quickly, it is interesting to note that in March of that year, Dickens writes to give his permission for the use of designs from *A Christmas Carol* for the cover of the published sheet music to 'A Song of Christmas', one of the many songs written from or about Dickens and his works. Perhaps it was that Dickens had been asked for his permission, or perhaps sheet music adaptations were still viewed as minor enough appropriations; either way, it seems intriguing that while Dickens was writing to his friends about the 'Gang of Robbers who have been printing the Carol', the 'damndest [sic] rascals in

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<sup>363</sup> In this letter, Dickens writes: For twenty years I am perfectly certain that I have never made any other allusion to the republication of my books in America than the good-humoured remark 'that if there had been international copyright between England and the States, I should have been a man of very large fortune, instead of a man of moderate savings, always supporting a very expensive public position.' Nor have I ever been such a fool as to charge the absence of international copyright upon individuals. Nor have I ever been so ungenerous, as to disguise or suppress the fact that I have received handsome sums from the Harpers for advance sheets. When I was in the States, I said what I had to say on the question, and there an end. I am absolutely certain that I have never since expressed myself, even with soreness, on the subject. [...] And for years and years when I have been asked about Readings in America, my invariable reply has been, 'I have so many friends there, and constantly receive so many earnest letters from personally unknown readers there, that, but for domestic reasons, I would go tomorrow.' [*Letters*, Vol.11, pp.443-444.]

<sup>364</sup> This publication was called 'A Christmas Ghost Story Reoriginated [sic] from the original by Charles Dickens Esquire and analytically condensed expressly for this work'. (*Letters*, Vol.4, p.16-17 f).

<sup>365</sup> *Letters*, Vol.4, p.18.

the World, one and all', 'against whom the most energetic vengeance of the Inimitable B, is solemnly (and lawfully) denounced' that Dickens would be giving his permission for images from the same written work to be used to decorate a piece which undoubtedly may also have ideas from the text as well.<sup>366</sup>

While Dickens was pursuing legislation against the copiers of the *Carol*, he was also tiring from the fruitless fight for International Copyright with American publishers. Dickens wrote to Cornelius Matthews in March of 1844 saying that of the state of copyright with America, 'the subject has long since passed from my thoughts. It only dwelt there, when I viewed the influences that make up an American government, through the mist of my own hopes and fancies. When that cleared away, I ceased to have any interest in the question.'<sup>367</sup> As hard as Dickens tried, there was no way of pursuing and stopping the sheer number of imitations and dramatisations of his works.

By 1850, there had been approximately 240 theatrical productions alone of Dickens's novels and characters, not including prose imitations published in other journals or dramatisations published and performed outside of the UK.<sup>368</sup> Dickens still had another twenty years of his life and seven major novels ahead of him. In the later years of his life Dickens went on exhaustive reading tours of Great Britain and America in order to establish an authority over performative pieces of his works. However, even Dickens's own readings were imitated by others after his death. Dickens's children and now great-grandchildren performed Dickens original readings and later, Emlyn Williams acted as the author and gave 'Dickens's public readings.'<sup>369</sup> Even in 2012, Dickens's Bicentenary year, actor Simon Callow

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<sup>366</sup> *Letters*, Vol.4, pp.18 and 20.

<sup>367</sup> *Letters*, Vol.4, p.60.

<sup>368</sup> H Philip Bolton, *Dickens Dramatised* (Boston: GK Hall, 1987). p.26.

<sup>369</sup> Standing at a lectern that is a duplicate of one used by Dickens, wearing whiskers and with a red geranium in his buttonhole [...] He is Dickens on tour, treating us to a healthy sampling of tales,

performed Dickens's characters as Dickens on stage in London and Dickens's great great grandson Gerald Dickens still performs as Dickens at festivals and events. In a note in his diary in 1839, Dickens wrote, 'copyrights need to be hereditary, for genius isn't'.<sup>370</sup> At this point, Dickens was still at the beginning of his career. Little did he know that even his great great grandchildren would still be benefitting from Dickens's own 'genius'.

While innumerable copyright laws have been passed concerning both domestic and international publications, the modern state of publication and appropriation is still often muddled and arguable. Like the plagiarisms and unauthorised reprinting of the Victorian era, copyright holders still find it hard to police the vast and abstract nature of fan and commercial reproduction and appropriation on the internet.<sup>371</sup> Many Victorian plays were permissible if they were considered a 'new enough' work; likewise many fan works published on the internet, have no suits brought against them because they are considered derivative.

The term 'derivative' is still hotly contested when copyright legality is discussed. As Aaron Schwabach explains, 'While any work incorporating characters, settings or story elements from an earlier work may be said to be "derivative" in a literary sense, not all such works will be "derivative" in a legal sense'.<sup>372</sup> He continues to explain, "Thus, an adaptation of a work to a new medium or a translation to a new language, for example, is likely to be a derivative work".<sup>373</sup> The legal description of derivation then is still basically the original work; the characters, plot, and other

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sketches and passages from his novels'. 'Theatre: Emlyn Williams as Dickens', in *New York Times Online* <[www.nytimes.com/1981/01/15/theatre/theatre-emlyn-williams-as-dickens.html](http://www.nytimes.com/1981/01/15/theatre/theatre-emlyn-williams-as-dickens.html)> [accessed 28 May 2017].

<sup>370</sup> *Letters*, Vol.1, p.639.

<sup>371</sup> Delving into the current convoluted state of copyright law regarding illegal downloading websites and the 'darknet' would necessitate another chapter and so I will restrict my analysis to fanfiction.

<sup>372</sup> Aaron Schwabach, *Fan Fiction and Copyright: Outsider Works and Intellectual Property Protection* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011). p.64.

<sup>373</sup> Schwabach, p.65.

aspects are generally transcribed intact. These legal derivations are also generally done with the consent of the copyright holder. However, literary derivations done by fans and others online are not authorised. However, rather than being direct translation of the original, they maintain the spirit or ‘world’ of the original while generating new plotlines. But of course, derivation does not equal copyright legality. Schwabach’s explanation of derivative may not make the issue of copyright infringement or intellectual property any easier to understand. Indeed, even written from a legal viewpoint (Schwabach is a Professor of Law) there is still no concrete conclusion on where fanfiction stands as copyright infringement. Despite more than one hundred and fifty years of copyright legislation, fanfiction’s relationship to ‘derivation’, ‘adaptation’, and ‘fair use’ is still amorphous.

Primarily published on the internet, fanfiction resists the name of plagiarism (although published authors may disagree) by being free to read. The few publications which might be called fanfiction which are published with royalties are usually legal because they are based on public domain content (such as derivative works of Jane Austen, i.e. *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*, *Mr. Darcy Take a Wife*, etc.) or their content is changed from being fanfiction to new work, as in the case of E.L. James’s *50 Shades of Grey* which originally began as a piece of fanfiction based on *Twilight*.<sup>374</sup> While the accessibility of the internet still causes many problems in copyright, especially republished work, modern laws have managed, for the most part, to restrict unauthorised adaptations, dramatisations, and derivative works from being published or performed for monetary gain.<sup>375</sup>

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<sup>374</sup> This process of changing a work of fanfiction into a new publishable work without copyright infringement is known to the fanfiction community as ‘filing off the serial numbers’. Sheenagh Pugh explains this, ‘This means making a piece of fan fiction suitable for more mainstream publication by removing specific references to the fan universe’ (Pugh, p.83).

<sup>375</sup> This is increasingly so with the closing of VPN loopholes which had allowed users who paid for streaming content from legal sources to access content from other countries for which their home country did not have licenses. For an example of this see David Fullagar’s (Vice President of Content

While direct republication on the internet is beholden to copyright laws, the law is less clear and less pursuable concerning the writing and dissemination of fanfiction. In the case of fan texts, the nature of appropriation is very similar to the Victorian world of Dickens. Derivation of published works to the stage in the nineteenth century was legally allowed. Similarly, derivation from published works into fanfiction is generally also overlooked by copyright law.

#### **4.2. Fanfiction: Archontic and Communal ‘Texts’**

In 2013, Amazon launched a new fanfiction platform dubbed ‘Kindle Worlds’, which would publish fanfiction, subject to various rules of content, and give derivative authors actual royalties from sales. Before its launch, *Metro* ran an article on the proposed idea. As author Ewan Morrison is quoted in the article, ‘It’s fine if it’s free- that’s just fans doing what they do- but once it starts to be monetised, it’s a major copyright problem for everyone and very hard to police.’<sup>376</sup> In fact, Amazon had of course based the structure of the platform around copyrights.

In the ten and a half page Publishing Agreement terms and conditions, the Kindle Worlds platform is much less democratic than it appears to be as a platform created to foster fanfiction. The platform only allows fanfiction based on certain ‘Original Worlds’ which are owned by the ‘World Licensor’. In other words, Amazon has gained permission from copyright holder companies for ‘permission’ to publish stories based on certain television stories. Therefore, while Amazon appears to be supporting fanfiction, it is only doing so under certain licensed terms. After accepting a piece of fanfiction, Amazon holds the ‘exclusive, irrevocable license’ for that

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Delivery Architecture at Netflix) statement from 14<sup>th</sup> January, 2016 at <https://media.netflix.com/en/company-blog/evolving-proxy-detection-as-a-global-service>.

<sup>376</sup> Ross McGuinness. “It’s a jungle out there in fanfic.” *Metro Newspaper*. Pages 12-13. Published Thursday 30, May, 2013. p.13.

fanfiction in addition to taking the copyright of all the ‘original copyrightable elements in your work’ including ‘original characters, scenes and events, and any rights you may have to any related trademarks’.<sup>377</sup> While not only basing its understanding of fanfiction on legal authorisation, Amazon is also legally gaining any intellectual property originally owned by the fanfiction writer. By holding these additional rights, Amazon is also allowed to publish any derivations of the fanfiction author’s work. The final denial of fanfiction ethos comes when Amazon asserts that the fanfiction author:

irrevocably waive[s] any legal claim you may have under any theory of law in any territory that your rights were infringed due to any use of your Work or the New Elements by us [...] including copyright infringement or breach of implied in fact contract (idea submission).<sup>378</sup>

The fact that Kindle Worlds pays its fanfiction authors (even if the fanfiction is restricted to certain television shows) confuses the nature of fanfiction and derivative works. Speaking of Kindle Worlds in an editorial in *The Guardian*, James Bridle writes, ‘it’s unlikely to change the landscape of online fiction’ but ‘the attempted legalisation and professionalization of one of the weirder and most enjoyable subcultures of the internet marks a significant moment in the history of networked literature’.<sup>379</sup>

In this sense, modern copyright is almost returning to Victorian standards by allowing a platform for derivative and interpreted works to become publishable and payable even if considered substandard quality. Speaking of Kindle Worlds, Ewan Morrison also echoes Dickens’s doubts about fan texts, “Fans are not professional writers [...] They don’t know about story structures and they don’t know about

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<sup>377</sup> Amazon, ‘Kindle Worlds Publishing Agreement’, in *Amazon.com* <kindleworlds-eu.amazon.com/agreement> [accessed 08 April 2016]. p.2.

<sup>378</sup> Amazon, p.5.

<sup>379</sup> James Bridle, ‘How Kindle Worlds aims to colonise fan fiction’, in *The Guardian* <www.theguardian.com/books.2013.jun/02/kindle-worlds-amazon-fan-fiction> [accessed 05 April 2016]



characters [...] It's really poor content."<sup>380</sup> However, this reductive generalization presents a problem to Sheenagh Pugh, another author interviewed for the article. She claims many amateur writers publishing on free internet forums are better writers than some published by major publishing houses. She also explains that the fanfiction idea that, "It evolved in the first place because fans so often felt source producers did not fully understand or appreciate the possibilities of their own source material."<sup>381</sup> If even the copyright of derivative works is in part returning to Victorian conventions then, fanfiction becomes an even more apt definition for the derivative works appearing in the journals and theatres of Dickens's own times.

Despite the many negative elements of Kindle Worlds, there is one interesting aspect to the platform which does align with other fanfiction communities. This part of Kindle Worlds hinges on the 'world' idea and is that the platform embraces, indeed encourages the archontic principle. In their words, 'Every story you publish adds to a World and becomes part of that World. We will allow other Kindle Worlds authors to use and build upon your new elements. Likewise, you may build on other Kindle Worlds stories'.<sup>382</sup> The archontic principle, like the feedback loop, the culture-text, and the idea of the paratext, is based on the idea of cumulative interpretations and representations creating an archive of character (or story as it were).

In 'Introduction to the Paratext', Gérard Genette explains that a literary work 'rarely appears in its naked state, without the reinforcement and accompaniment of a certain number of productions, themselves verbal or not, like an author's name, a title, a preface, illustrations'.<sup>383</sup> In simpler terms, 'every context creates a paratext'.<sup>384</sup>

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<sup>380</sup> McGuinness, p.13.

<sup>381</sup> McGuinness, p.13.

<sup>382</sup> Amazon, 'Kindle Worlds FAQs: Rights and the Publication Agreement', in *Kindle Worlds* <kindleworlds.amazon.com/faqs?topicId=A31DTV3VSRP82B> [accessed 05 April 2016]

<sup>383</sup> Gerard Genette, 'Introduction to the Paratext', *New Literary History*, 22 (1991)

<www.jstor.org/stable/469037> [accessed 16 March 2016] p.261.

<sup>384</sup> Genette, p.266.

While Genette is mainly talking about prefaces, textual commentary, acts of reading, etc. we cannot ignore the fact that this idea can be applied to adaptations and representations of characters including fan-produced texts and acts of reading within fandom.

Increasing familiarity with various metatextual elements of a story or character can create what Paul Davis explains as a 'culture-text'. In his discussion of *A Christmas Carol* as a 'culture-text', Davis explains that repeated elements of the story and characters within popular culture creates a shared cultural memory external to the original text and thus creates a 'culture-text.' Davis explains:

The text, *A Christmas Carol*, is fixed in Dickens's words, but the culture-text, the Carol as it has been re-created in the century and a half since it first appeared, changed as the reasons for its retelling change. We are still creating the culture-text of the Carol.<sup>385</sup>

Like the repetitive elements of memes, a text becomes a culture-text when elements of it are repeated often enough to engrain it into cultural memory.

The 'feedback loop' is a phrase used in various industries and practices.<sup>386</sup> Within popular culture and literature, feedback loops involve the popularity of a text enhancing its own popularity because of its prominence. In the terms of fanfiction and appropriation, David Brewer writes, 'the characters for whom further adventures were invented tended to be those whose immateriality was paradoxically guaranteed by the sheer material proliferation of different and differing editions, formats, and performances'.<sup>387</sup>

What all of these ideas have in common is that repetition, even indirect repetition (since derivations can interpret characters differently), can influence

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<sup>385</sup> Paul Davis, 'Retelling A Christmas Carol: Text and Culture-Text', *The American Scholar*, 59 (1990) <[www.jstor.org/stable/41211762](http://www.jstor.org/stable/41211762)> [accessed 11 April 2016] p.110.

<sup>386</sup> For example, feedback within an electrical system, the feedback loop in economics (see the *Financial Times* Lexicon at <http://lexicon.ft.com/Term?term=feedback-loop>), the feedback loop in customer service industry (see <http://conversionxl.com/generate-customer-feedback-loops-scale/>).

<sup>387</sup> Brewer, p.6.

memory more than the original alone. Whether it is through fan interpretations, commercial reproductions, or extra-textual elements, a character is rarely remembered solely through an idea of singular ‘original’.

It is in taking these multiple iterations and their accumulated memory that the archontic becomes a principle feature of a character. Abigail Derecho writes about fanfiction as naturally archontic and indeed fundamentally driven by the archontic principle in her chapter from *Fanfiction and Fan Communities in the Age of the Internet*. She begins by explaining the term’s origins in Derrida, ‘the internal drive of an archive to continually expand’ and that archive is never closed because of this drive.<sup>388</sup> Reader engagement with a character is fundamental to many fanfiction writers and it is this engagement which continues the archive of the character. Fan reactions to characters and subsequent fan productions expand on the archive of the character. As Francesca Coppa explains:

The existence of fanfiction postulates that characters are able to ‘walk’ not only from one artwork into another, but from one genre into another, fanfiction articulates that characters are neither constructed or owned [and have] a life of their own not dependent on any original ‘truth’ or ‘source’.<sup>389</sup>

Indeed, while he does not use the term ‘fanfiction’, David Brewer speaks of the same portability and repeatability of character when writing about the ‘Afterlives’ of characters explained by what he calls ‘imaginative expansion’. Brewer’s imaginative expansion is founded on the same archival qualities of fanfiction, ‘characters in broadly successful texts were treated as if they were both fundamentally incomplete and the common property of all. Far from being the final word on the subject, the

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<sup>388</sup> Abigail Derecho, ‘Archontic Literature: A Definition, A History, and Several Theories of Fan Fiction’, in *Fan Fiction and Fan Communities in the Age of the Internet*, ed. by Karen Hellekson and Kristina Busse (Jefferson: McFarland, 2006), pp. 61–78. p.64.

<sup>389</sup> Francesca Coppa, ‘Writing Bodies in Space: Media Fan Fiction as Theatrical Performance’, in *Fan Fiction and Fan Communities in the Age of the Internet*, ed. by Karen Hellekson and Kristina Busse (Jefferson: McFarland, 2006), pp. 225–44., p.230.

originary [sic] representation of these characters was, for readers engaged in these practices, merely a starting point'.<sup>390</sup>

The archontic texts, whether fan produced or authorised, work in tandem with the 'original' or source to create the archive of the character and it is in this dialogue where we find the cultural memory(s) of character. Deborah Kaplan explains, 'Cumulatively, these formal and informal analyses come together to inform a community understanding of character in the source text'.<sup>391</sup> In other words, the analyses of character in source and archontic texts is not even a unidirectional conversation but rather, interpreting how readers have appropriated and remembered characters in culture-texts, paratexts, etc. can help to better inform the original source (even if the appropriation is created hundreds of years after the original). John describes the ability of the archive to intersect media, time, and countries:

A distinctive feature of Dickens's mass cultural impact is his "portability", the ability of his novels and indeed his image, even during his lifetime, to travel across various media and national boundaries, and after his death, across historical periods.<sup>392</sup>

This portability across media worked so well that, as John traces, Dickens was often the choice for silent film adaptation since little textual reference was needed, 'Dickens's stories were well known enough to help audiences navigate their way through a film without dialogue'.<sup>393</sup>

Problems of definition plague fanfiction. Is it a form of adaptation, plagiarism, or transformation? There is a difference between adaptation (and forms of adaptations like dramatisation) and fanfiction in that adaptation can be authorised

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<sup>390</sup> Brewer, pp.1-2.

<sup>391</sup> Deborah Kaplan, 'Construction of Fan Fiction Character Through Narrative', in *Fan Fiction and Fan Communities in the Age of the Internet*, ed. by Karen Hellekson and Kristina Busse (Jefferson: McFarland, 2006), pp. 134-52. p.137.

<sup>392</sup> John, *Mass*, p.15.

<sup>393</sup> John, *Mass*, p.188.

and legal; for example screenwriters adapting a book into a film for a production company. With this understanding, it would be simple to shut down my argument of interpreting Victorian dramas and Dickens's own writings as fanfiction because the former is clearly copyright infringement for monetary gain, and the latter is by the original author. However, by looking at these texts not for how they were produced but the sentiment behind their production, they can be interpreted as a form of fan production. Looking first at forms of adapting a text, this transformation happens on at least two levels of textual intercourse: at the structural level, an adaptation rewords and reworks the original text; on the connotative level, adaptation may result in changing not only the plot but also character and character reception. In a very physical way, structural adaptation changes the way a reader experiences the text, whether it be through film, drama, or verse, or visual versus auditory experience. Connotative adaptation, in a much more abstract and less categorical way, changes the way a text is understood.

Structurally, Victorian dramatisations of Dickens's works in the UK were copyright infringement. They reworked Dickens's popular works in order to cash in on Dickens's success. However, connotatively these dramatisations were ultimately successful not for any value of the work in itself but for their connection to and celebration of Dickens's works. This very 'celebration' which increased the visibility and physicality of Dickens's characters, only enhanced the original characters and thus could be included in the archive of the character as a form of fanfiction-because it was the fans (the reception) that made these dramatisations work. Likewise, when Dickens continued the storylines of his characters in subsequent books (e.g. Samuel Pickwick and Sam Weller), which were categorically *not* sequels (I will discuss why later in this chapter) he did so, not for monetary gain but because his characters were not complete in their original form; their archives were not closed.

Whether adaptations were motivated by monetary gain or artistic interest, the dramatists and writers who ‘stole’ from Dickens did so very often in response to the public love for Dickens’s stories and characters. While undoubtedly plagiarism, especially within the modern day definition, most of these adaptations could also be called an early form of fanfiction. A modern term, fanfiction derives from combining ‘Fan’ and the fiction written by such pertaining to the object of fandom. Therefore, while we think of fanfiction as primarily a product of the internet, according to the *OED*, the beginnings of the terminology is founded in and around the nineteenth century with the use of the term ‘fan’. ‘Fan’ itself has its earliest modern association usage in America in the nineteenth-century as another term for followers of baseball. Earlier connections could be traced to ‘fanatic’ which was often used in the seventeenth century when speaking of over-enthusiastic devotees of a religion.<sup>394</sup> ‘Fandom’ itself is traced back to 1903.<sup>395</sup> While the term ‘fandom’ may not have been used in Dickens’s time, Dickens’s readers inarguably formed a community of shared interest and appreciation.

In fact, most critical studies of fanfiction begin with defining the term fanfiction and a critic’s particular take on what denotes fanfiction is the basis of most analyses of the form.<sup>396</sup> The debate about what is and what is not fanfiction even reaches into fandom with writers and readers of fanfiction unable to agree on a definition. In the introduction to *Fanfiction and Fan Communities in the Age of the Internet*, Karen Hellekson and Kristin Busse begin laying out a definition of fanfiction:

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<sup>394</sup> "Fanatic", in *Oxford English Dictionary Online*  
 <<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/68008?redirectedFrom=fanatic#eid>> [accessed 01 March 2016].

<sup>395</sup> 'Fandom', in *Oxford English Dictionary Online*  
 <<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/68041?redirectedFrom=fandom#eid>> [accessed 01 March 2016]

<sup>396</sup> Critics like Kristina Busse, Karen Hellekson, Matt Hills, Henry Jenkins, Sheenah Pugh, Abigail Derecho, Francesca Coppa, and many others.

Most definitions emphasise the amateur aspect, the community that surrounds the production, dissemination, and consumption of fanfiction. This aspect places fan production in a specific postmodern, post capitalist moment with easy access to the source text. [...] As such, fanfiction is defined as much by its context as its content.<sup>397</sup>

But this definition is just in the Introduction. Throughout the collaborative book, each writer of each chapter defines fanfiction for themselves in the context of their individual argument. Francesca Coppa has a simple definition, 'I am defining fanfiction narrowly as creative material featuring characters that have previously appeared in works whose copyright is held by others'.<sup>398</sup> Coppa's definition could include any form of plagiarism then whereas Hellekson and Busse have narrowed that idea by removing any professional plagiarisms. John Fiske refines the professionalization aspect further into involving economic gain; 'fans do not write or produce their texts for money; indeed, their productivity typically costs them money [...] There is a strong distrust of making profit in fandom, and those who attempt to do so are typically classed as hucksters rather than fans'.<sup>399</sup> This view of Fiske's is generally accepted by many fanfiction writers. However, as we have seen with *Kindle Worlds*, this is increasingly problematic. Even Henry Jenkins acknowledges this shifting view in his introduction to the twentieth anniversary edition of *Textual Poachers*, 'the bounds between what is and is not publishable are constantly shifting'.<sup>400</sup>

For Aaron Schwabach, positioning a fanfiction definition requires taking the market for a work into consideration, 'while fanfiction may infringe on the content

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<sup>397</sup> Kristina Busse and Karen Hellekson, 'Introduction: Work in Progress', in *Fan Fiction and Fan Communities in the Age of the Internet*, ed. by Kristina Busse and Karen Hellekson (Jefferson: McFarland, 2006), pp. 5-32. p.26.

<sup>398</sup> Coppa, p.226.

<sup>399</sup> John Fiske, 'The Cultural Economy of Fandom', in *The Adoring Audience: Fan Culture and Popular Media*, ed. by Lisa A. Lewis (London: Routledge, 1992), pp. 30-49. p.39-40.

<sup>400</sup> Henry Jenkins, *Textual Poachers: Television Fans and Participatory Culture*, 20th edn (London: Routledge, 2013). p.xxv.

owner's copyright and trademark rights, the fans who create and share it are the biggest, and for some genre works very nearly the only, market for the owner's works.'<sup>401</sup> Fiske also notes that fanfiction is often insular with fans writing and fans reading and very infrequently involving outside markets, 'because fan texts are not produced for profit, they do not need to be mass-marketed, so unlike official culture, fan culture makes no attempt to circulate its texts outside its own community'.<sup>402</sup>

After considering the market, Schwabach then breaks down his definition of fanfiction into either transformative or derivative works; transformative works are closely related to the original text such that infringement may have occurred and derivative works are works of a more imaginative nature.<sup>403</sup> Fanfiction studies have innumerable ways of explaining the act of writing fanfiction. For Schwabach, transformative and derivative are the terms to consider. For others, fanfiction can be considered a form of adaptation. Studying film adaptation, Geoffrey Wagner has broken down the process of adaptation into three modes, Transposition, Commentary, and Analogy.<sup>404</sup> Wagner defines these modes as; transposition, 'a novel is directly given on the screen, with the minimum of apparent interference'; commentary is 'where an original is taken and [...] altered in some respect [...] revealing a different intention on the part of the film-maker, rather than an infidelity or outright violation'; and analogy takes 'a fiction as a point of departure and therefore cannot be indicted as a violation of a literary original since the director has not attempted [...] to reproduce the original'.<sup>405</sup>

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<sup>401</sup> Schwabach, p.1.

<sup>402</sup> Fiske, p.40.

<sup>403</sup> Schwabach, p.67.

<sup>404</sup> While he is referring to Film Adaptation, we can use Wagner's modes in reference to adaptation in general since his method of approaching adaptation is textual transformation rather than film theory.

<sup>405</sup> Mireia Aragay, 'Introduction', in *Books in Motion: Adaptation, Intertextuality, Authorship*, ed. by Mireia Aragay (New York: Rodopi, 2005), pp. 11-34. p.16.



John Ellis posits that ‘The successful adaptation is the one that is able to replace the memory of the novel’.<sup>406</sup> What I would like to propose is, that the fanfiction performed and published in the Victorian era was not created to ‘replace the memory’ of Dickens’s original, and likewise was not directly transposition, but instead inherently, almost unconsciously, reflected the views of the wider public and the interest of the readership as a whole, rather than any individual dramatist or adapter. Taking theory of adaptation and the very nature of fanfiction as prerequisites, the representation, inclusion or exclusion, and performance of characters in Dickensian fanfiction can teach us more about the public reception of Dickens and the nature of his characters than any textual reading alone could show; because one of the aspects of fanfiction which Cultural Studies critics can agree on is the overall importance of character.

Bronwen Thomas cited a forum on *LiveJournal* in 2008 in which fanfiction writers talked about their motivations for writing fanfiction:

for the authors, it is all about the characters. [...] For fanfiction readers, the pleasure of recognition, of meeting favourite characters again is paramount [...] There is also pleasure to be had in approaching these familiar characters from new angles, placing them in different situations, or focusing on periods in their lives not previously explored.<sup>407</sup>

So for Dickens, as his own daughter remembers, ‘His genius for character sketching needs no proof- his characters live to vouch for themselves, for their reality’.<sup>408</sup> It is this very reality, the connection that readers feel with characters which spurs them on to read and write fanfiction. Character is so important to fanfiction that the ‘original’ characters are often not altered very much in fanfiction because they need

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<sup>406</sup> John Ellis, 'The Literary Adaptation', *Screen*, 23:1 (1982), 3-5. Doi:10.1093/screen/23.1.3. p.3.

<sup>407</sup> Bronwen Thomas, 'Gains and Losses? Writing it all down: Fan Fiction and Multimodality', in *New Perspectives on Narrative and Multimodality*, ed. by Ruth Page (New York City: Routledge, 2010), pp. 142-54. p.150.

<sup>408</sup> Mamie Dickens, *My Father as I Recall Him* (London; Middlesex: Roxburghe Press; Wildhern Press, 2009). p.31.

to be recognisable and canonical. As Sheenagh Pugh explains, ‘The one aspect of canon that is not usually up for alteration is the nature of characters. To some fanfic [sic] readers, these are the most important aspect of their fanfic universe and of any story set in it’.<sup>409</sup>

The shared reverence for character within the fanfiction community goes beyond reading but even into writing. Fanfiction authors often refer to characters as ‘our characters’ even when the characters being discussed are a fan’s original and not from the source text.<sup>410</sup> Again, like *Kindle World*’s archontic idea and the shared cultural memory of characters, often when a fan creates a new character within a piece of fanfiction, that new character becomes a part of the shared world and is likewise a collective being. Pugh explains, ‘if you create a character who comes alive for readers I think you must accept their feeling that they co-own him and can continue his story’.<sup>411</sup> Interestingly, here Pugh could be talking about the original author or the fan author.

One of the many problems Dickens had with fans appropriating his texts is tied up with the serial nature of his publishing. Because Dickens almost always published in monthly (sometimes weekly) numbers, his readers did not have completed novels from which to expand his characters. Instead, Dickens characters were actively living out their stories month by month (or week by week). This seriality created living unfinished characters that, even when their novels finished, never seemed completely finished themselves.

Because Dickens was writing while the public were reading, the open-ended nature of serial publication led to his works being adapted during publication. This meant adaptors often tried to anticipate the story progression.

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<sup>409</sup> Pugh, p.65-66.

<sup>410</sup> Pugh, p.67.

<sup>411</sup> Pugh, p.126-127.

Of one such concurrent adaptation of *NN* in 1838,<sup>412</sup> Dickens wrote in a letter to dramatist Frederick Yates:

My general objection to the adaptation of any unfinished work of mine simply is, that being badly done and worse acted it tends to vulgarize the characters, to destroy or weaken in the minds of those who see them the impressions I have endeavoured to create, and consequently to lessen the after-interest in their progress.<sup>413</sup>

In this circumstance Dickens approves of the dramatisation, and states that he will publically remove objection as he sometimes did upon attending the actual play and reviewing its 'quality.' What is apparent in this letter is that Dickens is concerned about affecting the reception of his characters by inaccurate representation or taking the characters in directions not in his plan, as may happen to adaptations of unfinished work. While Dickens was concerned with international and domestic copyright law his entire career, the above letter suggests that piracy attacked his identity as a writer at an even deeper, more personal level. This objection to appropriation is not commercial but artistic.

Appropriation while the work was in progress may seem counter intuitive- the pirated version might completely misinterpret characters' actions due to lack of information given in the original unfinished work. If we compare the serialisation of Dickens's works to the episodic format of television programs, there is a remarkable similarity between the interpretive work coming from Victorian pirates and modern fanfiction. Hellekson and Busse observe the both symbolic and empirical importance of 'the work in progress' to fan communities;

The source texts in many cases are serial, in progress, and constantly changing, as are the fan stories set in these universes. Fans' understanding of the characters and the universe the characters inhabit changes, just as scholarly understandings of fans and their relationship to one another, to the

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<sup>412</sup> *NN* was not completed until October 1839, almost a full year after this letter was written.

<sup>413</sup> *Letters*, Vol.1, p.463.

source text, and to the texts they generate is constantly being revised and rewritten.<sup>414</sup>

Not only is the work of fanfiction constantly being reinterpreted through the serialised nature of many sources of fandom (television shows, film series, etc.) but the relationships of fans to their source text is itself often a product of this serialisation. Henry Jenkins writes, ‘Once television characters enter into a broader circulation, intrude into our living rooms, pervade the fabric of our society, they belong to their audiences and not simply to the artists who originated them’.<sup>415</sup> Because Dickens wrote monthly numbers (and weekly), never having finished an entire book before publication began and often only writing one number ahead of schedule, he was facing the same process of fan appropriation of which Jenkins writes.

Kucich links Dickens’s serial publishing with the success of his works; ‘one effect of this form of publication was to intertwine the twists and turns of his plots with the rhythms of his readers’ lives over a period of eighteen months, which did much to promote a sense of “living with his characters”’.<sup>416</sup> Sarah Winter agrees, ‘Numerous Victorian readers described their affectionate attachment to Dickens’s novels and companionable friendship for Dickens’s characters as personal ties developed through repeated readings and revisited in fond remembrance in later life’.<sup>417</sup> Dickens’s regular publication meant that not only were readers connected to his characters whilst they were reading, but the repeated revisiting of the same characters over that time period also created a meme-like associational memory.

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<sup>414</sup> Busse, p.7.

<sup>415</sup> Jenkins, p.279.

<sup>416</sup> Kucich, p.395.

<sup>417</sup> Sarah Winter, *The Pleasures of Memory: Learning to Read with Charles Dickens* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2011). P.110.

Winter writes about the contribution of associational memory to the overall cultural memory of Dickens:

People tend to care about and retain associations with fictional characters and plots that have unfolded in serial formats over time; these meanings associated with serial media become embedded in recollections of other significant events, both individual and collective, not just because of their significance to the individual but because of their capacity for accruing a shared cultural relevance over time.<sup>418</sup>

Not only did his readers feel more connected to Dickens over the course of a novel's run, Dickens was also more aware of his current readership.

Dickens was able to comment in real time to his readers about characters and incidents in his stories. While these letters may not have been as instantaneous as author-fan interactions can be on the internet, the interaction itself was fairly similar. For fans, being able to wonder where the story would progress from number to number gave an important creative space in which to imagine characters' afterlives in fanfiction.

Sheenagh Pugh notes two important and central aspects of fanfiction in her study: 'Two of the basic premises of fanfiction are the beliefs that (a) fictional characters and universes can transcend both their original context and their creator and (b) the said creator cannot claim to know everything about them'.<sup>419</sup> While an author has 'created' a character, once that character is read by the public she no longer belongs exclusively to the author; 'Authorship is a sign of control rather than creation'.<sup>420</sup> Along with derivation and adaptation, the identities of reader and writer become subverted and amalgamated within the context of fanfiction.

The importance of the author has long been discussed and analysed by literary theorists in such seminal works as Roland Barthes's essay 'The Death of the Author'

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<sup>418</sup> Winter, p.327.

<sup>419</sup> Pugh, p.222.

<sup>420</sup> Coppa, p.231.

and Michel Foucault's *What is an Author?* Likewise, reader-response theory has addressed the importance of the reader and the relationship of the reader and the text.<sup>421</sup> When transgression between author and reader occurs in the form of fanfiction (when the reader, or fan, becomes the writer), the reader can no longer truly identify as outsider from the text; and indeed this is almost the goal of many fanfiction writers- to include themselves in the world of the novel.

Foucault writes that an author, amongst many things is, 'the conditions that fostered the formulation of the fundamental critical category of "the man and his work."' <sup>422</sup> Even 'work' comes under scrutiny in Foucault's search to find a definition:

If an individual is not an author, what are we to make of those things he has written or said, left among his papers or communicated to others? Is this not properly a work? [...] Assuming that we are dealing with an author, is everything he wrote and said, everything he left behind, to be included in his work?<sup>423</sup>

Together with the idea of 'work', the designation 'author' has its own denotation and connotation; this being that the title of 'author' means that that person has produced a piece of 'work' and also describes the nature of that production. As Foucault explains, 'The proper name and the name of an author oscillate between the poles of description and designation. [...] Presence is functional in that it serves as a means of classification.'<sup>424</sup> To be an 'author' is not only a state of being but also a function. It is within this 'oscillation' that fanfiction becomes a legitimate art form.

This transgression becomes clearer in Roland Barthes's seminal work *The Death of the Author*. Rather than singularize any entity within the act of writing and reading, Barthes prefers to eliminate identities and thus allow fluidity of relationship

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<sup>421</sup> For example, Stanley Fish's proposal that 'texts are empty in themselves and made only by the reader'. 'Stanley E. Fish', in *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*, ed. by Vincent B. Leitch (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2001), pp. 2067-70. p.2069.

<sup>422</sup> Michel Foucault. "What is an Author?" *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*. Pp1622-1636. Vincent B Leitch, ed. New York: W. W. Norton & Co, 2001. p.1623.

<sup>423</sup> Foucault, p.1624.

<sup>424</sup> Foucault, pp.1626-1627.

surrounding the work. He begins his essay by explaining, 'writing is the destruction of every voice, of every point of origin. Writing is that neutral, composite, oblique space where our subject slips away, the negative where all identity is lost, starting with the very identity of the body of writing.'<sup>425</sup> Writing begins, Barthes says, with the death of the author because it naturally externalises any connection to the author and thus becomes 'after' the author and excludes any possibility of a symbiotic relationship. For Barthes, the strongest relationship is not between the author and his work but between the work and the reader. In this sense he seems to agree with Pugh; that it is the reader, not the author that can truly understand the full potential of a work since the author is naturally *a priori*. In his words, Barthes says, 'but there is one place where this multiplicity is focused and that place is the reader, not, as was hitherto said, the author. [...] A text's unity lies not in its origin but in its destination.'<sup>426</sup>

Only recently has the reader become more prominent in literary theory. Published in 1980, Wolfgang Iser's *The Act of Reading* looked at reader-response theory. In a section titled 'Interaction between Text and Reader', Iser looks at the relationship between a work and its reader much as Foucault looked at the dialogue between an author and their work. After Barthes has 'buried' the god-author, Iser goes further to say, "the literary work has two poles, which we might call the artistic and the aesthetic: the artistic pole is the author's text, and the aesthetic is the realization accomplished by the reader.' The important action which Iser acknowledges but does not carry far enough is the creative production of the reader. Iser highlights the projections of the reader that 'fills the blanks' left in the world of the work. However, we need to push Iser's line of thought a bit further into the full

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<sup>425</sup> Roland Barthes. "The Death of the Author." *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*. Pp 1466-1470. Vincent B Leitch, ed. New York: W. W. Norton & Co, 2001. p.1466.

<sup>426</sup> Barthes, p.1469.

on construction of a new text by the reader; the important moment when the reader becomes an author. Perhaps because he was writing in the pre-internet age that Iser did not foresee this possibility as clearly as it appears to readers in the modern world; however, as we have already seen, fanfiction is a form that incontrovertibly predates the internet. As Schwabach elucidates, ‘The communications revolution of the past two decades has made it possible for this conversation between author and reader to become not unilateral or even bilateral, but multilateral.’<sup>427</sup> John Glavin goes even further to suggest that the reader-author is a necessary and immediate result of reading: ‘Those who read for themselves- rather than merely repeat other’s readings- are in fact always “after” and “aftering,” always restoring, adapting, supplying, making texts and promulgating meanings.’<sup>428</sup> Glavin is very aware of the influence of the god-author on adaptation and ‘refuses the priority of any sort of original.’<sup>429</sup>

Not only must readers cease their veneration of the author, but also, in order to create a true adaptation, must ‘get up off our knees from venerating the fetishized text’ and ‘return to the fundamental understanding that we are writers too.’<sup>430</sup> But fanfiction writers and readers were already there; ‘Fandom recognises no clear-cut line between artists and consumers; all fans are potential writers whose talents need to be discovered, nurtured, and promoted and who may be able to make a contribution, however modest, to the cultural wealth of the larger community’.<sup>431</sup>

Coming full circle, Wagner’s modes of adaptation can also be used as stages of reading and writing. Transposition in its direct relationship to the text is the author’s creation; commentary becomes the act of initial reading by the reader; analogy is finally where the text evolves into a closer relationship with its reader than the writer

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<sup>427</sup> Schwabach, p.146.

<sup>428</sup> John Glavin, *After Dickens: Reading, Adaptation, and Performance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999). p.4.

<sup>429</sup> Glavin, p.19.

<sup>430</sup> Glavin, p.7.

<sup>431</sup> Jenkins, p.280.



and any inherent intention has received many layers of interpretation such that it becomes more the property of the reader and the reader thus becomes the writer.

When Deborah Kaplan writes about the construction of fanfiction, she speaks of the process of ‘focalisation’ in which ‘events are narrated from a character’s point of view in order to influence reader identification with the character’.<sup>432</sup> Of course this is also a process of original authorship, and so what Kaplan is pointing out is that, while fanfiction writers may be borrowing characters that have already been ‘created’, the process of focalisation is still the same and thus the authorship is likewise similar. As Busse and Hellekson explain in their introduction to Kaplan’s chapter, ‘she compares the portrayal of character within fanfiction to the creation of original character in original fiction [...] Any character portrayal is therefore in part a conversation between readers and writers’.<sup>433</sup>

Even though he was the original author of the characters, Dickens used the interpretive space between reader and writer to extend the stories of his own characters. However, rather than being ‘sequels’ to these characters, his use of the Wellers and Pickwick in *MHC*, his re-creating Mrs Gamp in *Mrs Gamp with the Strolling Players*, and his use of Weller and Gamp again in *Mr. Nightingale’s Diary* are closer aligned to fanfiction because in these pieces Dickens has re-focalised the characters and placed them within different ‘worlds’. In other words, the Wellers and Pickwick are removed from the world of *PP* and are placed within the text of *MHC*, which places them as secondary characters to someone else’s story. If nothing else this reuse of characters is more of a cross-over than a sequel. In *Mrs. Gamp*, Dickens has taken a minor character and not only given her power over the narrative but has placed this character within the real world of Dickens himself and his friends. In

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<sup>432</sup> Kaplan, p.138.

<sup>433</sup> Busse, pp.27-28.

*Diary*, we see something else entirely; in this play Weller and Gamp are referenced through performance rather than defined as characters themselves.

What Dickens achieves in these three pieces is the loss of his authorial power in favour of the active narrative power of his characters. This is a progression from his struggling to retain control over his characters in the manuscripts. In a way, he is practising the process of fanfiction writers who often favour their writing fitting into the narrative they are recreating rather than wanting authorial voice for themselves; Sheenagh Pugh explains this, ‘Fanfic writers not necessarily wanting their own authorial voice because it would detract from their “becoming” the other characters’.<sup>434</sup>

#### **4.3. Dickens ‘Wanting More’: *Master Humphrey’s Clock*, *Mrs Gamp and the Strolling Players*, and *Mr. Nightingale’s Diary***

One of the simplest explanations for why people write fanfiction is that they want more. ‘Wanting more’ of characters or stories has spurred readers to create their own continuations of stories, or new adventures for characters when authors cease writing or take stories in directions of which fans do not approve. The desire for more can be broken down constructively into two categories of fanfiction, ‘more of’ and ‘more from’. A work that is considered ‘more of’ is similar to a sequel or ‘further adventures of’ story focusing on central characters from the original and in the style and format of the original.

Published in 1837-8, *Pickwick Abroad: or, The Tour in France* by G. W. M. Reynolds continues Pickwick’s and Sam Weller’s adventures in mainland Europe instead of England but follows a similar pattern of travel and narrative. In 1838,

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<sup>434</sup> Pugh, p.193.

Dickens wrote to Richard Bentley about another author, pseudonym 'Omega', in Germany who wrote another 'continuation' of *Pickwick* who wrote to Dickens to ask Dickens to put his name on it. Dickens writes, 'This Omega is an impertinent gentleman who has done me the favor [sic] to write a continuation of *Pickwick* and ask me to father<sup>435</sup> it. [...] I have written him a reply stating that I do not wish to accept his papers'.<sup>436</sup> Although this 'Omega' has written the story, he wants Dickens to 'adopt' it and give the *Pickwick* sequel authorisation.

The other way of writing fanfiction is the 'more from' which is taking characters and expanding their lives, backgrounds, or futures. These stories can change the format or style of writing and are primarily founded on specific characters. 'More from' stories can also be sequels but often take a character's future in a direction different to that expected by the original. In general, fanfiction written in the 'more from' vein are considered less derivative and less like plagiarism as they are borrowing the characters and not the content of plot from an original source.

Dickens's own continuations of his characters follow this latter form of fanfiction primarily because they are basing their narrative on character rather than narrative structure or plot similarities. In the three pieces I will look at in this section, Dickens re-focalises his new narratives by placing his characters in new situations, narratives dominated by other characters, or narratives placed in his own real-life circle of friends. Both Angela Thomas and David Brewer talk about the process of fans expanding on the lives of their favourite characters; Angela Thomas explains 'One way of enjoying a favourite text is not just to read about it, but to think about all aspects of the plot, the characters, and "what would happen if" scenarios'<sup>437</sup>

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<sup>435</sup> Even when speaking about a work not his own, Dickens still likens authorship to fatherhood.

<sup>436</sup> *Letters*, Vol..1, p.433.

<sup>437</sup> Angela Thomas, 'Fan Fiction Online: Engagement, Critical Response, and Affective Play Through Writing', *Australasian Journal of Language and Literacy*, 29 (2006), 226-39. p.229

while Brewer defines this as ‘probabilistic talk’, ‘endless speculation about what a character might “probably” or “possibly” do’.<sup>438</sup> By taking the time to publish his characters, his new publications and pieces, it is as if Dickens himself was never finished with his characters. Rather than write about them and seal their fate with the final number of the novels, Dickens not only continued writing about many of his characters, he also constantly referenced them and even parroted them in his letters.

#### **4.3.1. *Master Humphrey’s Clock***

On 27<sup>th</sup> of March, 1840, Dickens wrote to Chapman & Hall, ‘I am very busy upon the Wellers, father and son’.<sup>439</sup> This was eight days before the first number of *MHC* was published and over a month before the first appearance of Samuel Pickwick in the new journal. When writing what was meant to be the journal of *MHC*, Dickens reintroduced to his audience Samuel Pickwick, Sam Weller, and Tony Weller and introduced the new character of Tony Weller Junior, Sam Weller’s son.

Although Dickens mentions the Wellers in his letter, the first character to reappear was Pickwick in the fifth number of *MHC* published on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of May, 1840. The chapter was titled ‘Master Humphrey’s Visitor’ and so did not directly mention Pickwick at first; however to the trained eye, the illustration that accompanied the number (Figure 44) was unmistakable. While Sam and his father are mentioned by Master Humphrey, it was not until the next number on the 9<sup>th</sup> of May, 1840 that the Wellers reappeared in the text themselves.

In the chapters of *MHC* not included in the text of *OCS* and *BR*, Dickens gives his readers a glimpse of what has happened to these few *Pickwick* characters in the

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<sup>438</sup> Brewer, p.20.

<sup>439</sup> *Letters*, Vol.2, p.47.

years following *PP*. Sam Weller has a child named Tony Junior who Tony Weller dotes on. Pickwick joins Master Humphrey's circle of friends and their storytelling group. This new group is conducted much in the episodic vein of early *PP*. Sam and Tony enjoy hanging out with Humphrey's housekeeper and even form a parallel club; the rival clubs are illustrated in the two images seen in Figure 45.



**Figure 44: *Mr Pickwick introduces himself to Master Humphrey*, by Hablot Knight Browne (Phiz) (1840). Image©Archive.org.**



**Figure 45: *Proceedings from the Club and A Rival Club*, by Hablot Knight Browne (Phiz) (1840). Images©Archive.org**

As a sort of 'authorised sequel' to the Wellers and Pickwick, some might argue that it is not fanfiction, any more than any sequel is fanfiction- but in placing the narrative voice in Master Humphrey- who in turn acknowledges reading about Pickwick's adventures, Dickens is distancing the writing from his authorial control. In doing so, Dickens tries to imply that Pickwick's adventures were real and Master Humphrey's appreciation is that of an interested and devoted reader. This distance is further impressed upon the reader with the inclusion of what would become full novels themselves (*OCS* and *BR*) within the text of *MHC* but with little or no introduction or reference by the *MHC* characters.

One might argue that Dickens's revisiting of the Wellers and Pickwick was inevitable given how popular they were. G. K. Chesterton noted his expectation of *PP* continuing, 'Even as a boy I believed that there were some more pages that were torn out of my copy, and I am looking for them still'.<sup>440</sup> While he does not acknowledge *MHC*, Chesterton notes the portability of Samuel Weller within the Dickensian oeuvre, 'Nor is there any reason why these superb creatures, as a general rule, should be in one novel any more than another. There is no reason why Samuel Weller, in the course of his wanderings, should not wander into *Nicholas Nickleby*'.<sup>441</sup>

Dickens not only wrote about Pickwick and the Wellers as if they were real people, he also used their reappearances as a selling point for *MHC*. In a letter to Lady Holland at the end of April, 1840, he wrote 'I am almost vain enough to believe that you will be glad to hear of Mr. Pickwick, who, with Mr. Weller and his father, are about to return to public life under Master Humphrey's auspices.'<sup>442</sup> Dickens knows that his readers will be attracted to *MHC* after hearing of the inclusion of a few of their favourite characters. The success of the *Pickwick* imitations such as G. W. M.

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<sup>440</sup> Chesterton, p.109.

<sup>441</sup> Chesterton, p.110.

<sup>442</sup> *Letters*, Vol.2, p.63.

Reynold's *Pickwick Abroad* meant the Dickens was all too aware of the successful nature of using *Pickwick* characters.<sup>443</sup> The episodic nature of the novel also lent itself to continuation, a fact that Reynolds exploited. In Chesterton's words, 'It is a certain air of endlessness in the episodes, even in the shortest episodes- a sense that, although we leave them, they still go on'.<sup>444</sup>

Within the text of *MHC*, Dickens even has Humphrey comment on the *Pickwick* plagiarisms as if those texts not only existed in the world of *MHC* but also were libels of a real-life person rather than plagiarisms of a fictional text. Master Humphrey says to Pickwick upon first meeting, 'I remarked that I had read his adventures very often, and that his features were quite familiar to me from the published portraits. [...] I condoled with him upon the various libels on his character which had found their way into print'.<sup>445</sup> Humphrey mentions published portraits of Pickwick, rather than illustrations from his tales thus seeming to imply that Pickwick, rather than a personage known from a textual source, is a real person, if not in fact a celebrity.

Dickens also has Humphrey use the word 'libel' instead of plagiary or imitation or dramatization or any number of other words Dickens himself uses to describe the *Pickwick* imitators. By using the term 'libel', Humphrey is again insisting on Pickwick's 'realness' as a person and not a fictional character.<sup>446</sup> It might even be possible that Dickens decided to include Pickwick and the Wellers in *MHC* in

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<sup>443</sup> An advertisement for the 1847 republication of *Pickwick Abroad* in *Reynold's Miscellany* uses quotes from contemporary reviews of Reynold's book. One review quoted from *Age* states, '*Pickwick Abroad* is so well done by G.W.M. Reynolds that we must warn 'Boz' to look to his laurels.' Underneath this, a review from *The Sun* writes, 'we should say it was one of the cleverest and most original productions of the modern British Press.' ('Advertisement: *Pickwick Abroad*', *Reynold's Miscellany of Romance, General Literature, Science, and Art*, 2: 30 (1847) <<http://bit.ly/1WxrnPU>> [accessed 16 April 2016]) p.48.

<sup>444</sup> Chesterton, p.113.

<sup>445</sup> Charles Dickens, *Master Humphrey's Clock in Three Volumes* (London: Bradbury & Evans, 1840), I. p.51.

<sup>446</sup> 'Libel' being defined by the Oxford English Dictionary as 'Any published statement damaging to the reputation of a person'. ('Libel' definition 5a., in *Oxford English Dictionary Online* <<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/107845?rskey=uCL93U&result=1#eid>> [accessed 16 April 2016]

order to take back his authorial control from his imitators. As Bronwen Thomas says of fanfiction, 'fanfiction is to some extent born out of a sense of "loss" and a desire to preserve or re-create, perhaps re-inhabit the embodied representation of favourite characters and fictional worlds'.<sup>447</sup> Dickens had felt a loss of control and ownership of his characters because of the number of imitations and dramatisations. With *MHC*, he sought to reclaim his characters, albeit arguably through fanfiction style. When writing to George Cattermole about illustrations for *MHC*, Dickens wrote of his intentions, 'my object [is] to baffle the imitators and make it as novel as possible'.<sup>448</sup>

However, in the 'Preface' to the 1840 edition published by Bradbury & Evans, Dickens tells his readers of another intent for the journal:

When he [the author] sought to interest his readers in those who talked, and read, and listened, he revived Mr. Pickwick and his humble friends; not with any intention of reopening an exhausted and abandoned mine, but to connect them in the thoughts of those whose favourites they had seen, with the tranquil enjoyments of Master Humphrey.<sup>449</sup>

Here, Dickens is trying to refute the suggestion that he was 'using' his characters for their popularity or that he was meaning to continue their stories. Indeed, another reason *MHC* could not be considered a sequel for *PP* is that they barely feature in the full collection of *MHC* if you consider *OCS* and *BR* in their original publications as a part of the journal. Instead, Dickens is insisting that his goal with *MHC* was to share the enjoyment of reading and telling stories. He continues in the 'Preface', 'Having brought himself in the commencement of his undertaking to feel an interest in these quiet creatures [...] the author hoped- as authors will- to succeed in awakening some of his own emotions in the bosoms of his readers'.<sup>450</sup> Again, Dickens is suggesting that he has pleasure in experiencing his characters as if he had not created them but

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<sup>447</sup> Bronwen Thomas, p.149.

<sup>448</sup> *Letters*, Vol.2, pp.7-8.

<sup>449</sup> Charles Dickens, 'Preface to the 1840 Edition', in *Master Humphrey's Clock* (London: Bradbury & Evans, 1840), I, iii-iv. p.iii

<sup>450</sup> Dickens, 'Preface to the 1840 edition', p.iv.



was merely visiting them again. He is aligning his own enjoyment of reading and writing with that which he hopes his readers felt.

#### **4.3.2. *Mrs Gamp with the Strolling Players***

In 1847, after unsuccessfully raising the desired amount during a theatrical benefit for Leigh Hunt, Dickens thought of publishing a short humorous sketch written 'by' Sairey Gamp and illustrated by numerous illustrators. Dickens wrote to Forster on the 4<sup>th</sup> of August 1847:

[I thought] to write it in the character of Mrs Gamp. The title-page would describe it as an Account of a late Expedition into the North, for an Amateur Theatrical Benefit, written by Mrs. Gamp (who was an eye-witness), Inscribed to Mrs. Harris, Edited by Charles Dickens, and published, with illustrations on wood by so and so, in aid of the Benefit-fund.<sup>451</sup>

Dickens then details to Forster the entire idea, involving Mrs. Gamp travelling to Margate and joining a party of gentlemen who are bound on a theatrical excursion. This party of gentlemen is actually Dickens and his circle of friends who had performed in the theatrical benefit for Leigh Hunt.

Dickens would, in essence, be describing the incidents of travelling to the performances and the 'antics' his friends and himself got up to but mediated through the narration of Mrs. Gamp. He explains,

She will describe the whole thing in her own manner: sitting, in each place of performance, in the orchestra, next the gentleman who plays the kettle-drums. She gives her critical opinion of Ben Jonson as a literary character, and refers to the different members of the party, in the course of her description of the trip: having always an invincible animosity towards Jerrold, for Caudle reasons. She addresses herself, generally, to Mrs. Harris, to whom the book is dedicated, - but is discursive.<sup>452</sup>

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<sup>451</sup> *Letters*, Vol.5, p.140-141.

<sup>452</sup> *Letters*, Vol.5, p.140-141.

The piece was to be illustrated by Dickens's illustrators and friends.

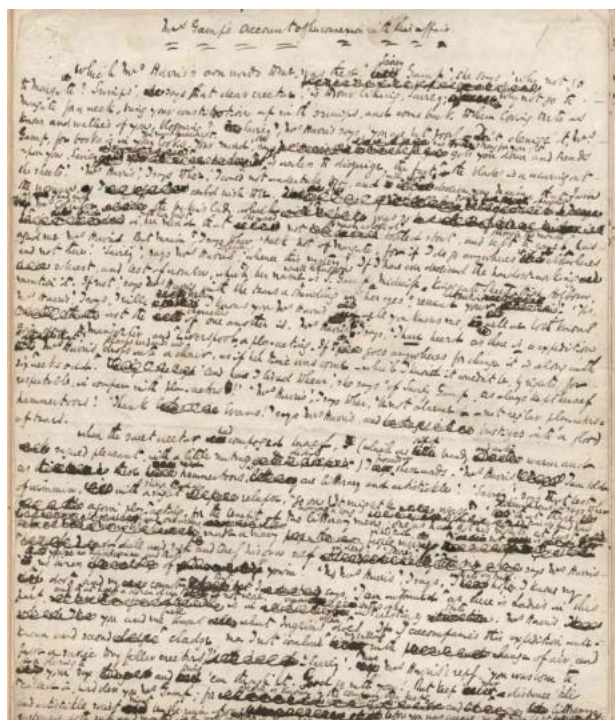
Dickens considered a number of titles for the piece including 'A New Piljan's Projiss'; a play on John Bunyan's classic 'Pilgrim's Progress' but in Mrs. Gamp's voice. When Dickens eliminated this title, he wrote to Mark Lemon, considering 'either- Mrs. Gamp's Vacation or Mrs. Gamp in the Provinces- retaining the rest of the title. I have thought of several other titles, but of none that suggests the matter, or that is so easily asked for, as these'.<sup>453</sup> Dickens wanted to make sure the connection between the piece and the theatrical benefit was clear. Perhaps this is why the piece was eventually published from the manuscript in 1899 with the title 'Mrs Gamp with the Strolling Players.'<sup>454</sup>

Dickens never finished or published the piece. Neither was it performed and only the explanation was circulated amongst his friends. The first time the sketch fragment was published was in Forster's *Life of Dickens*. In fact even the manuscript is still in private hands and what we now have of *Mrs Gamp with the Strolling Players* was published privately in only 85 copies from the privately owned manuscript in 1899. The manuscript then reappeared for £80,000 in a Jarndyce Rare Booksellers catalogue released for Dickens's Bicentenary (Figure 46).

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<sup>453</sup> *Letters*, Vol.5, p.147.

<sup>454</sup> Charles Dickens, *Mrs Gamp with the Strolling Players: an Unfinished Sketch* (New York City: Privately Printed, 1899). [Accessed online at Archive.org].



**Figure 46: Manuscript fragment *Mrs Gamp with the Strolling Players*, by Charles Dickens (1844). Image© Jarndyce Antiquarian Booksellers.**

The sketch is broken into two parts. The first is titled ‘Mrs Gamp’s Account of her Connexion with this Affair’. In this section, Mrs Gamp writes to Mrs Harris about her reasoning for going to Margate and hearing that the ladies amongst the players might be in need of her services.

The second part has Gamp narrating to Mrs Harris the events on a train platform before setting off on her adventure—which we unfortunately never see. In this part fiction mingles with real life as Mrs Gamp and her compartment companion Mr Wilson see and describe various people in Dickens’s real-life circle of friends. Dickens has begun a story in which one of his creations is written as a reality but even interacts with people Dickens knew. This is an interesting interplay itself without the added mention of Mrs Gamp’s ‘beeograffer’ and the introduction of Dickens himself standing on the train platform, nearly missing the train. Like *MHC*, the people in *Mrs Gamp with the Strolling Players* recognise Mrs Gamp as a living

person; indeed they know her by name even though she does not recognise them. Like Pickwick in *MHC*, Dickens is acknowledging Mrs Gamp as a real celebrity rather than a figment of his imagination.

This one way relationship is further enforced by the idea that what readers know of Mrs Gamp is, in fact, a biography. This revelation is interesting since what readers would know of the 'character' of Mrs Gamp (as distinct from the 'person' in the sketch) is as a minor character in *MC*, a novel named after another person.

The sketch is similar to *MHC* by proposing that Gamp is a real person, however the relationship of her character to the reader is further complicated by the insinuation that she inhabits the same world the reader does (whereas Pickwick and the Wellers were still inside of a narrative text in *MHC*). By making Mrs Gamp a part of his own reality and his own circle of friends, Dickens distances himself further from a supposed 'creator' role. In Mrs Gamp's own words, Dickens becomes a biographer, not an author, a mere vessel for Mrs Gamp's narrative. Being distanced from an authorship role aligns Dickens more with the reader and the fanfiction writer than with his original role.

In addition to Dickens's subjugated role and Mrs Gamp's elevated role of narrator and writer, Mrs Gamp is also placed as the author both in this sketch and in her original role in *MC* because Mrs Gamp is herself a creator of Mrs Harris. As Charles Kent originally points out, '[Gamp] is not only a creation of character, she is herself a creator of character. To the Novelist we are indebted for Mrs Gamp, but to Mrs Gamp herself we are indebted for Mrs Harris'.<sup>455</sup>

It is interesting that we only have these two sections, as Dickens wrote to George Henry Lewes in 1847, "The little book descriptive of the Amateur Theatricals

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<sup>455</sup> Quoted in Winter, p.122.

is nearly done. It is written by Mrs. Gamp, and inscribed to Mrs. Harris'.<sup>456</sup> Perhaps Dickens only meant to add a third section, that of the actual theatrical? If it was nearly finished, one wonders why Dickens never completed nor published the sketch. I have already spoken about Dickens performing the character of Mrs Gamp in his public readings. In 'Mrs Gamp', the character does not need to be performed because she is already real. Sarah Winter says, 'Mrs Gamp herself is materialised by taking on an originating, authorial function' in creating the character of Mrs Harris.<sup>457</sup> Other characters in Dickens are allowed their own 'creative role' such as Mr Dick's writing of his memorial. However, Mrs Gamp is allowed the creative power of speaking to/with her creation much as Dickens speaks to/with Mrs Gamp.

#### **4.3.3. *Mr. Nightingale's Diary***

The play *Mr Nightingale's Diary* was written collaboratively between Charles Dickens and Mark Lemon in 1851. The text as published by James R. Osgood & Co in 1877 does not give the names Sam Weller or Mrs Gamp as either characters or character descriptions. Rather, Gabblewig, played by Dickens, enters as 'Boots' and as 'Old Woman.' Even though these characters are not given the names Sam Weller and Sairey Gamp, they were both recognised by the audience as these characters. Dickens wrote to Charles Macready in 1851 about a performance of *Diary*, 'wherein a distinguished Amateur will sustain a variety of Assumption-parts, and in particular Samuel Weller and Mrs. Gamp- of which I say no more.'<sup>458</sup> Clearly much of the 'character' of these two parts will have come across during the production; one wonders what Dickens looked like dressed up as Sairey Gamp. Unfortunately the

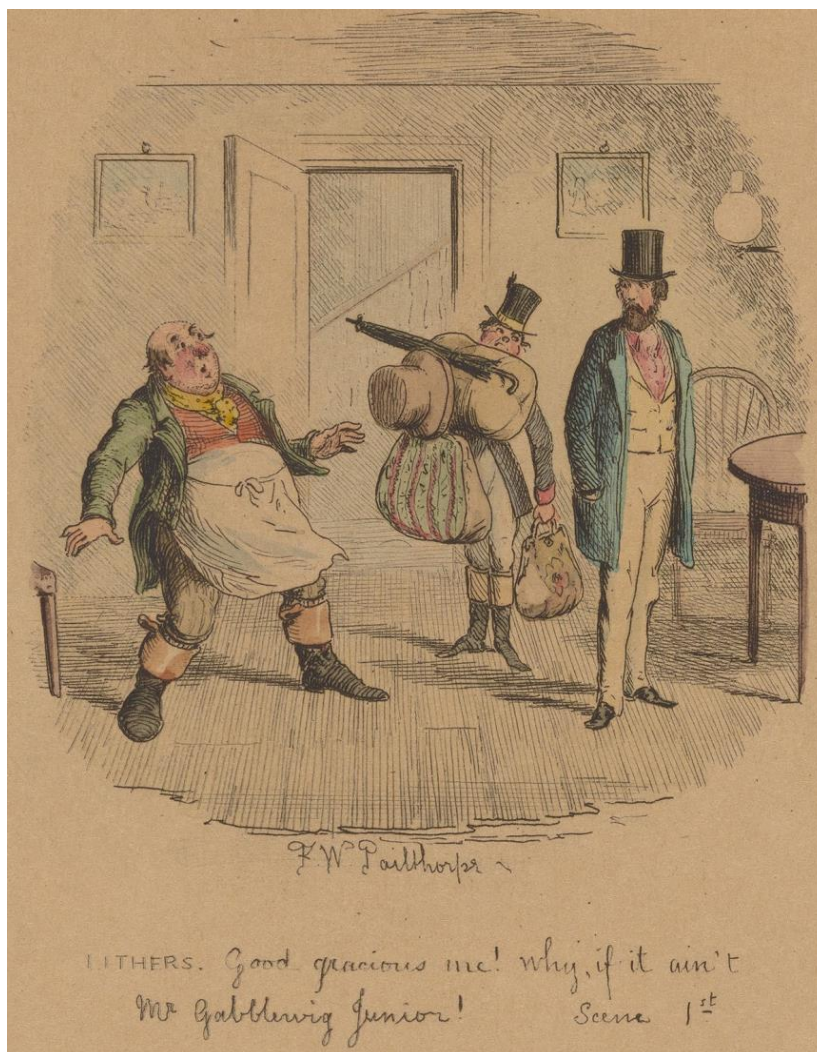
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<sup>456</sup> *Letters*, Vol.5, pp.147-148.

<sup>457</sup> Winter, p.125.

<sup>458</sup> *Letters*, Vol.6, p398.

only illustration of the play was produced years later by F.W. Pailthorpe and shows a scene from the beginning of the play. In Figure 47. Instead of choosing to illustrate a scene in which Sam Weller or Mrs Gamp appeared, Pailthorpe instead chose to highlight Dickens's involvement in the play by clearly modelling his depiction of Mr Gabblewig after Dickens.



**Figure 47: *Mr. Nightingale's Diary*, by F. W. Pailthorpe (1877). Image© Morgan Library Collections.**

The importance of this play is that, by performing the characters as Weller and Gamp, Dickens (and by author credit, Lemon) were acknowledging these

characters' portability and reality beyond their novels' plots. Similar to the portability of a pantomime character, Weller and Gamp had already so ingrained themselves into cultural memory that Dickens need only act 'like' them and not necessarily 'be' them on stage for the audience to understand who these characters were. Unlike *Mrs Gamp with the Strolling Players*, in which Dickens and his friends were living on the same plane as Sairey Gamp and Mrs Harris, in *Mr Nightingale's Diary*, Dickens and his friends were actively mimicking Sairey Gamp and Sam Weller.

As one final thought, the idea of Dickens playing Mrs Gamp was not that unique. According to H. Philip Bolton, although *Martin Chuzzlewit* was published between 1843 and 1844, it was not until an 1864 production in New York City that the character of Sairey Gamp on stage was played by a woman, Mrs Gilbert.<sup>459</sup>

Dickens revisited the Wellers, *Pickwick*, and Mrs Gamp because these characters were audience favourites. Dickens knew that even a vague dialogue reference or costume change would bring these characters to mind. However, he also chose these characters because they were real to him. Dickens's constant parroting of Mrs Gamp's and the Wellers's speech patterns in his letters to friends proves that not only were these characters in the back of Dickens's mind constantly but that they were permanent enough to bring to life at a moment's notice. Dickens's own embodiment of these characters, both in prose and in physical form, is a testament to his connection to these characters as well as a sign of their living independent from him. If Dickens was fully in control of these characters, he would not feel the need to revisit them and he would not be able to separate himself from them as he does through his re-focalisation.

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<sup>459</sup> Bolton, p.223.

#### 4.4. Readers and Reception in Cultural Memory

I argued earlier that dramatisations and adaptations of Dickens's works by others could be analysed as a type of fanfiction because of their reception. In order to understand why so many iterations of Dickens's works existed we must try to understand the readership that supported these appropriations as well as Dickens's place within popular culture.

Fanfiction is often a collaboration between original, reader, and adaptor. However, despite the name, fanfiction need not be restricted to fans. The use of the term 'fan' within fanfiction demonstrates the level of interest and enthusiasm which is often an impetus for new associative works. However, character continuation in cultural memory is not solely the realm of fanfiction or fandom. This section will look at a number of ways Dickens's characters and works have developed afterlives from general readership to reverent fandom.

Deborah Kaplan points out that one of the basic beginnings in a community of fans is the act of informally analysing texts and characters: 'A large part of the fannish experience lies in analysing the source texts of fandom. Fans interpret these texts through discussion and formal analysis, but also through the creative act of writing fanfiction'.<sup>460</sup> John Fiske agrees and goes further by saying that for many, the community of the fandom is as important if not more important than the object of fandom itself. He writes:

Indeed, much of the pleasure of fandom lies in the fan talk that it produces, and many fans report that their choice of their object of fandom was determined at least as much by the oral community they wished to join as much by any of its inherent characteristics.<sup>461</sup>

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<sup>460</sup> Kaplan, p.135.

<sup>461</sup> Fiske, p.38.



Henry Jenkins also points out the interpretive nature of fan communities.<sup>462</sup> In his seminal work on fan communities, Jenkins describes the analytic power of fandom in almost academic terms:

Organized [sic] fandom is, perhaps first and foremost, an institution of theory and criticism, a semi-structured space where competing interpretations and evaluations of common texts are proposed, debated, and negotiated and where readers speculate about the nature of the mass media and their own relationship to it.<sup>463</sup>

In fact, in so saying Jenkins is perhaps proposing that fan communities and their analytic practices are not only turned toward the object of fandom but are also self-reflexive. In 2005, Cornel Sandross directly affirms Jenkins's thought about fan self-reflexivity. He writes, 'we can never step outside the system and look upon it from above. It is therefore all the more important to acknowledge one's own perspective'.<sup>464</sup>

The self-reflexive and communal nature of fan analysis is often ignored in favour of the subjects of fan fervour, the TV show, book, or movie. However, if we consider fan interaction as one of the types of reader-response, we can now consider the connection of fan to text as opposed to pathologising fandom as the province of recluses or social outcasts.

There are many levels on which a reader can connect with a text; casual public, regular reader, enthusiast, fan, and academic (or scholar). While fans and scholars might both be the largest contributors to the perpetuation of a text, for the most part both have fairly insular communities. Fandom and academia are often kept separate because of the perceived difference between the subjects of interest.

Joli Jenson proposes:

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<sup>462</sup> Jenkins, p.45.

<sup>463</sup> Jenkins, p.86.

<sup>464</sup> Cornel Sandross, *Fans: The Mirror of Consumption* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2005). p.5.

But what happens if we change the objects of this description from fans to, say professors? What if we describe the loyalties that scholars feel to academic disciplines rather than to team sports, and attendance at scholarly conferences, rather than Who concerts and soccer matches?<sup>465</sup>

The debate surrounding what is deemed ‘worthy’ of academic study and what is considered the province of entertainment and hobbies rather than analysis is a continuation of the separation of culture into ‘high’ and ‘low’. While one might not want to directly acknowledge the division of ‘high’ and ‘low’ culture as so named, too often the distinction is inherently although unconsciously present. Joli Jensen traces the usually accepted division thus:

The objects of an aficionado’s desire are usually deemed high culture: Eliot not Elvis; paintings not posters [...] Apparently, if the object of desire is popular with the lower or middle classes, relatively inexpensive and widely available; it is fandom (or a harmless hobby); if it is popular with the wealthy and well educated, expensive and rare, it is preference, interest, or expertise.<sup>466</sup>

However, even when Jensen published this chapter in 1992, the cultural paradigm was moving away from definitions like ‘high’ and ‘low’. What is now read as one of the most important works in the study of fan cultures and new media, Henry Jenkins’s *Textual Poachers* was published in the same year, 1992. The insistence on using such a binary creates a host of additional nomenclatures and each requires their own definitions and distinctions. As we can see from Jensen’s splitting of the two fields, she uses multiple terms to explain reader/text relationships. According to Jensen, the aficionado is the academic who has a ‘reasonable’ interest in her subject but is distinct from a fan solely because her subject is ‘high’ culture.

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<sup>465</sup> Joli Jensen, 'Fandom as Pathology: The Consequences of Characterisation', in *The Adoring Audience: Fan Culture and Popular Media*, ed. by Lisa A. Lewis (London: Routledge, 1992), pp. 9-29. p.19.

<sup>466</sup> Jensen, p.19.

As we saw in the second chapter, Dickens holds a special place in literary criticism and popular culture as an author able to not only cross the supposed boundary between 'high' and 'low' culture but also can unite the two. F. R. Leavis did not originally include Dickens in *The Great Tradition*. John writes of this exclusion, 'To the Leavises, there was always something a little "cheap" and "easy" about Dickens, though they recognised in him a kind of "greatness"'.<sup>467</sup> Even the Leavises were unsettled by Dickens's place- which seemed to waiver between 'great' and 'popular'; 'Dickens's commercialism and the tailoring of his work to the mass market was inimical to the Leavisite agenda'.<sup>468</sup> To Leavis, Dickens should not be able to be both a genius and a popular author. However, this is what he was. Even shortly after Dickens's death, George H. Lewes articulated Dickens's position as straddling a high/low cultural dichotomy, although at the time it was recognised as the difference between cheap popular publications and elite literature:

Dickens delighted thousands, that his admirers were found in all classes, and in all countries; that he stirred the sympathy of the masses not easily reached through Literature [...] that he impressed a new direction on popular writing, and modified the Literature of his age, in its spirit no less than in its form.<sup>469</sup>

Lewes writes that not only was Dickens able to cross between classes in writing, but that the very popularity of his writing meant that the literature of the age was redefined.

Winter traces a similar disjunction between high and low culture in Dickens through the use of the term 'celebrity'. In Winter's work, she finds that pre-Dickens, the term celebrity was used exclusively for elite, iconic national figures; however, as Dickens's new form of celebrity across classes and literary forms became popular, the term celebrity began to be used to mean 'a popular person'. Winter writes, 'The

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<sup>467</sup> John, p.19.

<sup>468</sup> John, p.18.

<sup>469</sup> Lewes, p.57.

transition from “celebrity” as fame or reputation to “celebrity” as a term for a famous person seems strongly associated with evolving understandings of the publicity and popularity surrounding authorship in the 1810s through the 1840s.’<sup>470</sup> If Dickens intersects or spans the division between elite and popular, the ways readers responded to his celebrity also transcended those boundaries. Dickens was admired by other writers as well as hounded by the masses.

Juliet John speaks of Dickens’s conscious intent to unite multiple classes under the instructive power of literature:

he envisaged the novel as a popular form imbibing popular cultural influences yet appealing to all sections of the populace. He thus destabilised the familiar idea of a binary opposition between high and low culture, and subverted established cultural hierarchies.<sup>471</sup>

Thus, though critics from Dickens’s time through to the Leavises have had trouble defining the role of Dickens’s work in literary history and cultural memory, Dickens himself was trying to create a community of feeling in his work, ‘culture [as] a bridge and a mode of connection between social groups’.<sup>472</sup>

Where an individual can identify as a fan, fandom is much more a collective definition. While it may seem anachronistic to define the culture surrounding Dickens as fandom, even modern scholars of fandom will acknowledge that any fixed idea of what fandom or ‘fans’ are is impossible; as Henry Jenkins says; ‘There is nothing timeless and unchanging about this culture; fandom originates in response to specific historical conditions [...] and remains constantly in flux’.<sup>473</sup> Hence, we can adapt the definition to fit communities of a similar nature even if the word itself may

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<sup>470</sup> Winter, p.83.

<sup>471</sup> John, p.40.

<sup>472</sup> John, p.44.

<sup>473</sup> Jenkins, p.3.

not yet have been coined. However, taking the application of the culture around Dickens's popularity as a form of fandom has its own implications.

Studies seeking to quantify Dickens's readership have often fallen into abstraction because of the numerous instances of informal public readings of the latest Dickens instalment, or the 'handing down' of the latest or previous issues. In short, it is impossible and impractical to assume that for every single number or instalment sold, there are a quantifiable number of readers. This community of readers meant that Dickens, in his lifetime, experienced a popularity that is comparable to the modern culture of fandom. As much as Jenkins defines fandom as 'an imagined community constructed through the collective imagination', Dickens often encountered and wrote about very concrete elements of the fandom surrounding himself and his works.<sup>474</sup> Not only was he aware of his fans, Dickens was able to respond to and about them often. In fact, Dickens wrote to Forster in 1853, 'If I were to measure my deserts by people's remembrance of me, I should be a prodigy of intolerability'.<sup>475</sup>

The community of appreciation of Dickens's works was often a collective affair. Readers shared copies of the latest published number, or held public readings much like those Dickens himself later began to hold. How Dickens's readers have viewed, remembered, and represented the characters from Dickens's novels and what these interpretations mean to how we remember these characters in the modern day can help us understand how Dickens's characters in cultural memory creates an archive.

David Bleich explains this community experience, 'Although the resymbolization [sic] of a text is usually a fully private affair, it is always done in

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<sup>474</sup> Jenkins, p.xxix.

<sup>475</sup> *Letters*, Vol.7, p.159.

reference to some communal purpose'.<sup>476</sup> With Dickens's fandom, this communal purpose is quite obvious in the existence of innumerable Nickleby, Pickwick (and the Pickwick Bicycle Club), and even the occasional Uncommercial Travellers', Boz, and Mark Tapley Clubs.

#### 4.4.1. Dickensian Fan Clubs

The collective experience of fan clubs in Dickensian fandom has existed since the publication of *PP*. Perhaps suggested by the club in the novel, fans of the work began to re-enact the adventures and style of the Pickwick Club in their own clubs. As early as 1837, Dickens wrote a response to William Howison of the Edinburgh Pickwick Club:

I have to acknowledge the receipt of your letter informing me of the institution of an "Edinburgh Pickwick Club"- and conveying to me from its members a most gratifying and welcome assurance of their good-will and regard. I believe with you that this is the first society of the kind, established North of the Tweed, and I cannot tell you how much delight it has afforded me to hear of its existence. [...] you will be the most lively [sic] club in all the Empire, from this time [...] Mr. Pickwick's heart is among you always. [It] has afforded me so much delight as the being so pleasantly and cheerily remembered by the rising spirits of distant places in their moments of relaxation and enjoyment.<sup>477</sup>

Dickens was writing to Howison in December of 1837. At this point, *PP* had finished publication in October and Dickens was already well into the serialisation of *OT*. Dickens himself is quite positive about the clubs. While he was struggling with the unauthorised theatrical adaptations of his novels, he responded positively to fans forming clubs around the world. There was at least one Pickwick Club that was meeting regularly in April of 1837. In an edition of the *Dickensian* in 1919, John F. Dexter publishes a transcript of a newspaper clipping in his possession, advertising

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<sup>476</sup> David Bleich, *Subjective Criticism* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981). p.137.

<sup>477</sup> *Letters*, Vol.1, p.346.

for 'The Pickwick Club' meetings at the Sun Tavern in Longacre, London. Dated the first of April, the advertisement states:

The Pickwick Club

Is held at the Sun Tavern, 66 Long-acre, kept by Manders, the Comedian, where the public may depend on finding the Harmonic Chair filled every Tuesday and Friday evenings, at 9 o'clock, and supported by that description of convivial, literary, and vocal talent which has characterized it as one of the best in the metropolis. N.B- Superior Wines, Spirits, Ales, Stout, etc., supplied, with the Pickwick Papers for perusal.<sup>478</sup>

It is interesting that the advertisement is placed to attract customers into the tavern but the connection of the club to the novel seems as an afterthought; the novel is listed alongside the kinds of drinks the tavern offers. Indeed, the name of the club seems enough of a reference for readers who might be interested in attending. The article in the *Dickensian* in which the advertisement is reprinted mentions this club as the earliest known Pickwick Club.<sup>479</sup>

In another article from the journal in 1934, the Pickwick Club from the Sun Tavern in Longacre is again found referenced in an old newspaper clipping; this clipping being more of a feature on the club than an advertisement. In this feature, from *The Town* on the 9<sup>th</sup> September, 1837, the article mentions that club host goes by the name 'Mr. P' or 'Mr. Pickwick'. The feature even claims 'In kindness of heart, and imperturbable good humour, he yields not even his illustrious prototype'.<sup>480</sup> This aspect of the Longacre Pickwick Club is a reoccurring one; in many Pickwick Clubs, senior members often assumed the names of the members of the Pickwick Club in *PP*, with the president nearly always being called Pickwick.

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<sup>478</sup> 'The Earliest Known Pickwick Club', *Dickensian*, XV (1919) <Proquestonline> [accessed 2 March 2016] p.161.

<sup>479</sup> Since writing this, another Pickwick club has been discovered to be in existence since at least January 1837.

<sup>480</sup> 'The Earliest Known Pickwick Club', *Dickensian*, 30 (1934) <ProquestOnline> [accessed 1 March 2016] p.213.

Another example of this is in the Pickwick Bicycle Club formed in London in 1870. The 'history' of the Club was published in 1904 by the Club and can now be found on the Club's website. Of the name, Walter E. Blake writes:

Charles Dickens had but recently quitted for ever the sphere of his immortal labours [...] and his death caused a wave of sorrowful enthusiasm with regard to his writings, and a general desire to associate his name or works with any undertaking which might be suitable for the purpose: and here seemed an ideal opportunity – 'Pickwick' was suggested and found favour.<sup>481</sup>

In that same meeting, Blake writes of the decision to use names from the novel:

it was further agreed that each member should be known by a sobriquet selected from the characters in the Pickwick Papers, and is addressed by that name at all club meetings; the Captain always to be Samuel Pickwick, Esq., during his tenure of that office. The sobriquets were in the first place balloted for, with the following results (K. M. Yeoman, of course, being Mr. Pickwick); J. A. Johnson, Mr Jingle; J. Bryant, Tracy Tupman; W. E. Maverly, Sam Weller; L. C. B. Yeoman, Serjeant Buzfuz; and D. S. Medcalf, Mr Wardle.<sup>482</sup>

Thereafter in the history, Blake often writes the sobriquet first and then writes the real name of the club member after in brackets.

That Dickensian fan clubs not only wanted to celebrate Dickens's works but also identify with characters and even assume the names of characters within the club setting is an important aspect of how Dickens is celebrated in fandom. While these fan club members are not fully acting out the characters from the novel as they would in a play or other adaptation of the work, they are acting as the characters through their focalisation of the character. This form of appropriation is similar to fanfiction in that the fans are taking Dickens's characters and reinterpreting the character through the fan's subjective point of view; sometimes this would mean that they are combining the character with themselves so that they are both the president of the club and Samuel Pickwick but yet neither individually. But because this role-

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<sup>481</sup> Walter E. Blake, 'History of the Pickwick Bicycle Club', in *Pickwick Bicycle Club* <<http://www.pickwickbc.org.uk/History-of-PBC.html>> [accessed 20 February 2016]

<sup>482</sup> Blake



playing is not individual, it is made possible in the setting of the fan clubs; the focalisation of the character is not only through the individual but is mediated by the setting of the fan community. Deborah Kaplan explains this community interpretation, ‘cumulatively, these formal and informal analyses come together to inform a community understanding of character in the source text’.<sup>483</sup>

For many, describing someone as a fan is a negative description because it implies fanaticism, obsession, hysteria, or otherwise ‘abnormal behaviour’. Jenson remarks:

To be a fan, Schickel and others imply, is to attempt to live vicariously, through the perceived lives of the famous. [...] Fandom is conceived of as a chronic attempt to compensate for a perceived personal lack of autonomy, absence of community, incomplete identity, lack of power and lack of recognition.<sup>484</sup>

The role-playing in the Pickwick Clubs may fit this description; however, the above explanation does not take into account the object of affection. The members of the Pickwick Club form and take on the roles of the members of the club in the novel because they have combined their individual affection and interpretation into a community of shared affection. Schickel’s implication which Jenson is précising is, like many early studies of fandom, not considering the object of fandom when analysing fan activities.

The performance of the Pickwick fandom within the structure of an imitation of the club reinforces the collective nature of fandom. By inhabiting Dickens’s characters outside of plot points (beyond the association of the club), these fans are making *PP* into a present active event and its characters into living beings outside of the confines of the novel’s plot. This free agency of character interpretation is all the more apparent by club members taking on character roles before the character’s

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<sup>483</sup> Kaplan, p.137.

<sup>484</sup> Jenson, p. 17.

story is 'resolved' in the novel (before the novel has finished being written). John Fiske supports this point when writing about 'The Cultural Economy of Fandom', 'This melding of the team of performer and the fan into a productive community minimizes the difference between artists and audience and turns the text into an event, not an art object'.<sup>485</sup> An art object would be static even if the interpretations of it are not whereas Dickens's characters are neither static in their text nor in their fan interpretations. The free agency of character within the fan club also illustrates how fans are able and willing to remove characters from their plots. As Jenkins explains:

Fans seemingly blur the boundaries between fact and fiction, speaking of characters as if they had an existence apart from their textual manifestations, entering into the realm of the fiction as if it were a tangible place they can inhabit and explore.<sup>486</sup>

By engaging with character, either in role playing in fan clubs or through fanfiction as we will see later, Dickens's fans are not only readers but become producers; and it is in fan productions that a new separation of character from 'source' allows character to become more in flux within cultural memory.

Amongst the fan clubs created in honour of Dickens or his works, it is the Pickwick Clubs which were often the longest running and had the greatest popularity. Only three years after writing to Howison about the Edinburgh club, Dickens writes again about a Pickwick Club, this one was as far away as New Zealand. Dickens replies to T. P. Grinstead:

It was very curious to see the old familiar name [...] an assurance of the great gratification I have derived from the circumstances of their meeting together for social purposes, under this name. To be associated with their pleasant recollections of home in their hours of relaxation, is to me a most proud and happy distinction. I really cannot tell you how very much it has interested and pleased me. I hope the Brighton club still flourishes nobly.<sup>487</sup>

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<sup>485</sup> Fiske, p.40.

<sup>486</sup> Jenkins, p.18.

<sup>487</sup> *Letters*, Vol.2, pp.161-162.

Not only is the Pickwick Club of New Zealand celebrating the character and personality of Pickwick himself, its use of Dickens's text is representing a connection to 'home', to England. Pickwick is then not only a character but a metaphor for England and nostalgia for the lost country of the expatriates.

#### **4.5. Conclusion**

Dickensian fanfiction, fan clubs, and academic associations continue to be prominent even two hundred years after the novelist's birth. The shared experience of reading Dickens's characters, shared even by Dickens himself, continues to connect readers and scholars of all ages. It is this same sense of community which has fostered a collective memory of Dickens's characters. The Dickens 'archive' is always expanding. But in this chapter I have mainly focused on textual examples of Dickens's characters in cultural memory. In the next chapter, this analysis will continue but into the medium of physical collectibles, discussions of community and archive will turn into discussions of use and value but these discussions are still inexorably linked. As Matt Hills explains, "These fan-based "use-values" interact with systems which belong to the economy "proper", meaning that the existence of a marketplace for media-related collectibles is underpinned by the lived experiences of fandom.'<sup>488</sup>

For Dickens's consumers, the archontic experience of a character only adds to the affective value of a collectible though it may not contribute to its economic value. Consider the value conundrum of memorabilia which is intrinsically economically valueless but gets economic value through its affective value. Hills writes:

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<sup>488</sup> Matt Hills, *Fan Cultures* (London: Routledge, 2002).p.35.

An excellent example of the “dialectic of value” is the existence of a market for media tie-in memorabilia or “collectibles”. This market can be examined easily enough by looking at the internet site ebay.com. [...] Many commodities offered for sale on EBay should, according to the conventional logic of use and exchange value, be almost worthless. However, due to many of them having been intensely subjectively valued by fans, such commodities take on a re-defined “exchange-value”. But this new exchange-value is not predetermined by any “laws of value”. It is created through the durability of fan’s attachments, and through the fans’ desire to own merchandise which is often no longer being industrially produced.’<sup>489</sup>

The communal function of Dickens’s readership, at whichever level of reverence, meant that Dickens’s works and his characters were discussed among readers; this ultimately contributed to cultural memory. Dickens’s stories linked difference classes of people and resisted the distinction between high and low culture. John writes of this communal nature, ‘Dickens’s novels were not just books to be read; they were coveted, (for the illiterate) stories to be heard, and they provided gossip or news to be exchanged’.<sup>490</sup> The nature of Dickens’s works as commodities will be explored in the next chapter.

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<sup>489</sup> Hills, p.35.

<sup>490</sup> John, *Mass*, p.4.

## 5. Curiosity Shopping for Dickens

### 5.1. The Theory of Things: Use and Value

Dickens's characters have had diverse afterlives. Not only have Dickens's characters been appropriated into other forms of literature, they also appear in many forms of physical objects. From collectible to household item, a quick search of ebay will show any reader that Dickens's characters live in more than books. Juliet John links this tendency toward portability as contributing to Dickens's life in the heritage industry; 'The portability of Dickens's characters and his associations with cultural heritage have always made the Dickens brand attractive to manufacturers of certain kinds of "things"'.<sup>491</sup>

The study of 'things' is not a new field. In fact, there are so many ways of analysing things, indeed even defining things, that scholars in many different disciplines have tried to single out an overall importance or interpretation of things in their field. While the study of thing theory has held increasing importance in Victorian Studies in recent years with special conferences held focusing on Victorian things (such as the Victorian Paraphernalia Symposium at Leeds Trinity University), books on Thing Theory can be found in the Cultural Studies sections of academic libraries as well as in the Literary Studies sections. It is, inherently, a focus of study which strengthens when supported through many disciplines. Whether looking at artefacts from museums for historical and narrative analysis or dissecting the 'things' in a story for cultural significance, the study of things itself transcends any single theoretical standpoint.

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<sup>491</sup> John, p.251.

Using thing theory in a traditional literary field- by looking at characters in Charles Dickens- might seem to restrict its scope but the very nature of ‘things’ being physically concrete but semantically abstract means that even in a specific field, thing theory has its range. Bill Brown points out in his seminal work *Things*, ‘For even the most coarse and common-sensical [sic] things, mere things, perpetually pose a problem because of the specific unspecificity [sic] that thing denotes.’<sup>492</sup>

Among the many definitions of things, there are a number of binary and tertiary relationships set up between subject and object (the object being the thing and the subject being amorphous). First, critics seem to mainly align themselves within either disciplines or theoretical methodologies. For example, Sattaur cites Asa Briggs’s 1988 *Victorian Things*- one of the earlier works surveyed- as being grounded in an historical reading, possibly because of Briggs’s history background. A small selection from Briggs elucidates this approach further, ‘I wanted to consider the *things* which they designed, named, made, advertised, bought and sold, listed, counted, collected, gave to others, threw away or bequeathed’.<sup>493</sup> In other words, Briggs is advocating the study of things as the key to experiencing living history. Because objects have material form and can last (nearly unchanged) in a way in which history fundamentally cannot, experiencing historical objects is a physical way one can experience history.

There was a trend in the 1980s and since of looking at things in literature in relation to arguments made by Marx, Barthes, Benjamin, and others; these critics have all looked at ‘things’ as defined as commodities within commodity culture and relationships of consumption, consumerism, nationalism (and/or empire), and economy. Using the definition of ‘commodity’ instead of thing is inherently tied to

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<sup>492</sup> Bill Brown, ‘Thing Theory’, in *Things*, ed. by Bill Brown (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2004), pp. 1-22. p.3

<sup>493</sup> Sattaur, p.352.

cultural economics. ‘Things’ can be interpreted using relationships of use and value (and further aspects of production) as in arguments made by DeCerteau, Heidegger, and again Benjamin. Critics in the early twenty-first century began to consider affect in addition to questions of consumption and nationalism.<sup>494</sup> When considering affect, things can be interpreted and understood as commodities but there is the ‘new’ dialogue of market value versus sentimental value. What was understood as the binary of subject-commodity can now be analysed in the tertiary relationship of subject-object (instead of commodity)-sentiment or affect.<sup>495</sup>

Looking again at the addition of thing theory to the study of commodity culture, the third element of affect or sentiment implies that a thing can be looked at independent from or in addition to its economic market value. By adding affect into the equation, ‘value’ itself becomes an amorphous idea. Not only can an object’s sentimental value be affected by its relation to the subject in question, even an object’s market value can be thus be affected.

But even critics who seem to embrace developing and changing relationships between things and their subjects and the world around them, still seem unable to abandon their reliance on terminology and the ability to achieve a set single ‘definition’ as a way of understanding. For instance, when beginning his argument on ‘why things’, Brown writes that things are ‘some stable alternative to the instabilities and uncertainties, the ambiguities and anxieties, forever fetishized by theory [...] something concrete that relieves us from the unnecessary abstraction’.<sup>496</sup> In other words, the study of things is more satisfying because things are physical entities and their interpretation may also be ‘stable’, unlike theory. Later on in the text, Brown

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<sup>494</sup> Brown, *A Sense of Things* (2003); Freedgood’s *The Ideas in Things* (2006); Plotz, *Portable Property* (2008).

<sup>495</sup> Sattaur, p.352.

<sup>496</sup> Brown, p.1.

claims that the very use of the word ‘thing’ to define certain object relations is appropriate because of its abstract quality: ‘It [thing] designates an amorphous characteristic or a frankly irresolvable enigma [...] the thing seems to name the object, just as it is, even as it names something else’.<sup>497</sup> There seems to be a difference of opinion when studying things between the physical or the quantifiable ‘fact’ and the abstract theory or understanding.

Rather than propose a binary relationship between physical and abstract, or likewise between object and understanding, there needs to be a spectrum. When writing about Heidegger and values, Joós comes close to defining this very need for a ‘spectrum’ in his ‘Thesis of Valuation’, ‘There are no abstract values, because all valuation is about individuals, hence all values have degrees.’<sup>498</sup> This ‘thesis of valuation’ could be called a ‘spectrum’ of valuation. Even when looking directly at Heidegger’s binary of the valuable and the useful, Joós notes the breaking down of the binary into further binaries of the object alone versus the object and man or subject.<sup>499</sup> Brown develops this idea further, ‘The story of objects asserting themselves as things, then, is the story of a changed relation to the human subject and thus the story of how the thing really names less an object than a particular subject-object relation’.<sup>500</sup> While Brown is still using the language of binaries, we can combine his understanding of subject and object relations with Joós’s ‘degrees’ in his ‘Thesis of Valuation’ and begin to consider a wider definition of things.

The third relation in our triumvirate spectrum is affect. Affect comes into play inherently in the interpretation of subject-object relationship of things. Simply by trying to interpret or understand our relationship to things is to include a notion of

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<sup>497</sup> Brown, p.5.

<sup>498</sup> Ernest Joós, *Dialogue with Heidegger on Values: Ethics for Times of Crisis*, Amercian University Studies Series V: Philosophy edn (New York: Peter Lang, 1991), CXXVII. p.145.

<sup>499</sup> Joós, p.4.

<sup>500</sup> Brown, p.4.



affect. For example, a museum curator will construct an exhibition room to display certain items for public viewing. In developing an exhibition strategy, and designing layout and information panels, the curator(s) will assert an intended or unintentional design on the interpretation of the things to be displayed. I will briefly look later at how the changing aims of the Charles Dickens Museum (from its opening to its refurbishment in 2012) for example, affected how artefacts were viewed and valued and which artefacts were given more importance. David Francis, in the Department of Learning at the British Museum, spoke of Jean Francois Lyotard's idea that exhibition design can be developed similarly to a story-arc with exposition, rising action, climax, falling action, and denouement.<sup>501</sup> While this concerns the physical layout and presentation of things in certain settings, individual contextualising of things in interpretation can be done in a similar way. Jennifer Sattaur states this idea of affect quite well:

Focused as it is with the process of self-identification through and in relation to material objects, it allows for objects to be valued or devalued without reference to economic exchange systems, concentrating on the wider cultural exchanges that revolve around objects in society'.<sup>502</sup>

This process of 'self-identification' is in itself involved in affect. Likewise, self-identification can be done within the museum with the imposition of the interpretation of the curator as well as the immediate affect felt by the viewer. Thus, the interpretation of things within certain settings, narrative or physical, can affect the nature of the thing. As Brown states, 'however materially stable objects maybe seem, they are, let us say, different things in different scenes'.<sup>503</sup>

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<sup>501</sup> David Francis, 'Archaeology and Aesthetics: Changing Narratives in British Museum Blockbuster Viking Exhibitions 1980-2013', in *In(ter)ventions: Object Histories Outside and Inside the Museum* (London: [n.pub.], 2015).

<sup>502</sup> Sattaur, p.354.

<sup>503</sup> Brown, p.9.

Before tackling the ‘value’ and meaning of things, I must first aim to settle on logical semantics which will ultimately enhance or support my reading. I am using the fairly broad nomenclature ‘things’ since every other word that is useful carries with it its own connotations. For example, certain words may seem similar such as: memorabilia, souvenirs, paraphernalia, tat, monument, memorial, object, artefact, curio, antique, trinket, collectible, item, token, keepsake, relic, product, commodity, merchandise, trash, treasure, belonging, gift, work, or objet d’art. However, each word implies different values, different purposes, and different meanings. As DeCerteau says of Foucault, ‘This very uncertainty and terminological instability is already suggestive’.<sup>504</sup> How then, can we even hope to look at the vastly different kinds of things, the manner and reason of their production and dissemination, the reason and intent of their preservation, let alone looking at things as representations or appropriations of characters?

I am going to look at a small selection of things from museum collections and online auction websites to show a representation of the sort of ways in which Dickens’s characters were represented in things and how these things may have strengthened, or in some cases created, a lasting memory of certain characters in the public consciousness. However, I would also like to propose looking at these things beyond their physical ‘thingness’ and to looking at characters in Dickens’s novels as the things themselves. By looking at the afterlife of the character as much as the ‘afterlife’ of the thing and thus applying thing theory to characters, the nature of the afterlife may become more apparent. Thus, things are produced with certain motives and interpretations just as characters are written; moving further, things are consumed with varied affect, motivations, and meanings just as characters are reimagined and appropriated. I hope to look at the balance of these two steps of life

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<sup>504</sup> DeCerteau, p.10.

and afterlife in things representing Dickens's characters in following Bill Brown's idea:

[Q]uestions that ask not whether things are but what work they perform-questions, in fact, not about things themselves but about the subject-object relation in particular temporal and spatial contexts. These may be the first questions, if only the first, that precipitate a new materialism that takes objects for granted only in order to grant them their potency- to show how they organise our private and public affection.<sup>505</sup>

In essence, by approaching characters as the things in thing theory, I will be subverting John Plotz's sentiment that 'it [thing] is at once the essence of a person and yet at the same time utterly material, devoid of all the spiritual qualities that an actual individual would have' since the thing is at once a 'thing' and also an entity which has the 'spiritual qualities' of a person.<sup>506</sup>

Some of the pieces in the following sections have been found in museums, in particular the art pieces. However, the overall lack of variety and number of these museum pieces and the ephemeral nature of many Dickensian things necessitated my looking through numerous online auction sites for current or past sales of Dickens things. This disparity in ownership itself says something about how Dickensian things are consumed.

## **5.2. Museum Artefact or Collectible?**

Even in their reference to Dickens, things have been stratified by their value; despite studies of Dickens revisiting and evaluating Dickens's place between 'high' and 'low' cultures, the Dickensian things are often separated between 'important' artefacts like manuscripts and collectibles like brass fire irons. John notes that one

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<sup>505</sup> Brown, p.7.

<sup>506</sup> John Plotz, 'Can the Sofa Speak? A Look at Thing Theory', *Criticism*, 47 (2005), 109-18. p.13.

record of the Gad's Hill sale reported in 1870 in *Chambers Journal of Popular Literature, Science, and Art* differentiated between objects of value (manuscripts) and overpriced mementoes of the author (art and chairs), "The sums raised were "so enormous" that they were "out of proportion to their intrinsic worth". The sale suggests his living consciousness that fame and posthumousness could transform even the most vulgar of objects into "artefacts".<sup>507</sup>

Object studies are inherent to the museum just as language is inherent to literary studies. Even within the tracing of provenance, historiographies, or even exhibition history, curators and museum studies academics have long been interested in object stories, affect, and material representation as well as ways of mediating an object by its display, position within an exhibition, or acquisition history.

If we take for granted the extension of the idea of 'text' into material objects we can further develop an understanding of said object in relation to the literal text rather than taking the object externally as representative of only culture or history. In other words, borrowing historiography practices from museum studies and applying them to the creative 'abstract' of characters in novels and then tracing a historiography for them through things (external to the original novel) or in other words, their afterlife, we can create a provenance for these characters within cultural memory.<sup>508</sup>

As popular as Dickens's stories were, his characters were instantly embraced by the reading public as solid entities, not only as real individuals, but also as objects they could interact with, relate to, and even own. Samuel Weller became not only a

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<sup>507</sup> John, p.249.

<sup>508</sup> That is 'provenance' as defined as 'the history of ownership' of an object rather than the other definition of 'the origin'. 'Provenance', in *Merriam Webster Dictionary* <[www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/provenance](http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/provenance)> [accessed 18 March 2015]

recognizable friend, but someone whom you could imitate in dress with the purchase of Samuel Weller breeches. Likewise, you too could laugh at Sairey Gamp's drunken mutterings about Mrs. Harris before going out for a walk using your own Gamp umbrella. Pickwick canes and waistcoats were also available for purchase- not as a character costume, but as their own fashion. Unlike the consumerism of today's franchises, where the company releasing a blockbuster film will produce innumerable toys, collectibles, posters, and clothes to accompany the release, the things from Dickens's stories that were for sale were not released by the author. In fact, the closest Dickens came himself to creating a material franchise of his work was in the releasing of a publication of his own adaptation of his stories to accompany his public reading tours. Even then, Dickens and Chapman & Hall, his publishers, only did this to stop others from doing it.

Of course, any of these things made and sold could be companies seeking to gain financially from Dickens's success. Like the plagiarisms sold while Dickens was publishing his own stories, writers, publishing houses, and artists all wanted to capitalise on the Dickens brand. Regardless of the amount of profit or fame they may have received from their appropriations, what is significant is that these things were made and that people bought them. If statues of Little Nell were produced and sold, why did the artist and pottery company choose that character (even in terms of profit, why did they believe that character liable to make a profit) and why would someone buy such a piece? But beyond their production, we can look at the reception of these things as cultural artefacts too; these things can show us a form of living history, how the reading public reacted to Dickens's characters, collected them, made them their own.

Unfortunately, while these and other examples of early Victorian appropriations of Dickens's characters are often written about, there exists very little

material evidence left of these everyday useful items. In 1891, early Dickensian Percy Fitzgerald published *The History of the Posthumous Papers of the Pickwick Club* and gives one of the few Victorian accounts of the ‘original’ Pickwick memorabilia:

Yet, in less than six months from the appearance of the first number of the *Pickwick Papers*, the whole reading world was talking about them [...] Pickwick chintzes figured in linen-drapers’ windows, and Weller corduroys in breeches-makers’ advertisements; Boz cabs might be seen rattling through the streets [...] There were to be seen “Pickwick canes,” “Pickwick gaiters,” “Pickwick Hats,” with narrow curled brims; and even tobacco-stoppers.<sup>509</sup>

What must it have looked like, especially to Dickens, to see his creations displayed in shop windows and even worn on the public? The only surviving items similar to Fitzgerald’s description which I have been able to trace are a piece of fabric printed with Pickwick illustrations in the Metropolitan Museum of Art Collections<sup>510</sup>, a printed silk handkerchief/scarf in the Museum of London, and numerous worn brass pipe-tampers with Dickens characters which can be found on online websites but are impossible to date.<sup>511</sup> Whether the loss of these original pieces is because they were worn or used until they fell apart or were destroyed, or whether they do still exist but have lost their provenance or reference as being related to Dickens is still a question. There is also the possibility that the majority of Dickensian collectibles are still in private hands and thus not accessible online until they may be sold via an online vendor; or these things may have been thrown away.

One possibility for these things not surviving, or not being held in museum collections at least, was that they could have been considered ‘not worthy’ of being in a museum. If we think of the ‘collectibles’ which are released for modern books and films, how many of them might be conserved in museums for later generations?

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<sup>509</sup> Percy Fitzgerald, *The History of Pickwick: An account of its Characters, Localities, Allusions, and Illustrations* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1891).pp. 24-25.

<sup>510</sup> I have since found a similar piece of fabric in the collections of the Smithsonian Institute.

<sup>511</sup> I am, perhaps wrongly, assuming the pipe tampers to be at least somewhere from Victorian to 1930s since the popularity of such things may have decreased with the increasing popularity of the cigarette over the pipe.

Certainly, for a long time and still in many circles, everyday ‘tat’ was and is still not considered museum-worthy- even ‘historical tat’ so to speak. There is, of course, the odd exception to this rule; specialist museums have sprung up dedicated to specialised collections but these are rather the exception than the norm and the intentions of these collections are possibly more constrictive than traditional museums. Collectibles are just that, collectible, and not necessarily valuable artefacts.

I have already briefly mentioned museum ‘tactics’ - as DeCerteau calls it, or subjectivity or affect. Take, for example, Brown’s proposal that, ‘We begin to confront the thingness of objects when they stop working for us’.<sup>512</sup> This idea is perfectly summed up in the idea of the museum and museum display. Things can become ‘worthy’ of artefact status when they become ‘useless’ as determined by their original or ‘constructed’ use; a notable example of this is the inclusion of various types of mobile phone in a museum display on communication and time in the Greenwich Observatory Museum. As I will show later, Dickens dolls become valuable when they are displayed as historical artefact or aesthetic art and not when they are ‘simply’ toys. But what happens when we try to look at things as referentially important within their moment of usefulness? What can we learn about Dickens’s characters if we look at their appropriation as toys versus their appropriation as art? Also, what more can we learn when Dickens’s characters are made into aesthetic toys or the transition when what was a useful object becomes nothing more than art?

For this continuing discontinuity between museum artefact and personal collectible, I am going to look at some of the character things I have found on online auction websites, like ebay and Invaluable, and a few museum collection items from the Charles Dickens Museum in London and a few other museums. I myself have

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<sup>512</sup> Brown, p.4.

been able to work with the curator of the Charles Dickens Museum (CDM) and see the different kinds of items collected in their stores through years of different curators and different acquisition strategies. For example, at the inception of the museum in 1925 and for the first twenty years at least, there are numerous hand-made items donated to the collections representing Dickens's characters. Later, in the 1980s and 1990s, the museum itself sold CDM 'authorised' collectibles. Since the bicentenary refurbishment the museum is more concerned with Dickens's personal possessions and artefacts relating to the house itself and Dickens's time in it rather than fan creations or collectibles.

Collecting and 'buying' Dickens was almost contiguous with the publication of *PP*. While *Pickwick* is often cited as having such an effect on the reading public it was immediately appropriated by plagiarisers. The centenary of *Pickwick* in 1935 relived this glut of memorabilia, mainly organised by the Dickens Fellowship and the Dickens House Museum (as the Charles Dickens Museum was known at the time). They re-released *Pickwick* in its original format of numbers; they sold statues and calendars from the museum; they wrote exhaustively about *Pickwick*, *Pickwick Music*, and *Pickwick* fanfiction in the *Dickensian*.

In 1927 the Dickens Fellowship, in order to raise funds for the newly opened Museum, sold Christmas gifts representing Dickens and his characters.<sup>513</sup> These gifts included postcards and artwork, calendars, and special editions of Dickens's works; but the largest selection of gifts listed were the brass items, many of which can still be found for sale on online auctions sites and in charity shops; these include toasting forks, bells, door knockers, paperweights, letter racks, corkscrews, knives, pipe stops, pokers and more. These gifts were sold at different price points for different characters including in addition to Dickens himself, *Pickwick*, The Fat Boy, Sam

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<sup>513</sup> 'Buy Some Presents at The Dickens House', *Dickensian*, 321 (1927), 1-3.



Weller, Tony Weller, Mrs Bardell, Perker, Tom Pinch, Pecksniff, Mrs Gamp, Artful Dodger, Bumble, Bill Sikes, Micawber, Trotty Veck, and Martin Chuzzlewit. Again, the Museum and Fellowship had chosen to focus on Dickens's earlier characters for their selection of Christmas gifts. Interestingly, only Trotty Veck was chosen from any of the Christmas Stories or Christmas Books. The two groups show, in their selection of type of gift and character represented, that they were trying, in the first years of the Museum's existence, to bring Dickens into the house. Rather than creating decorative and collectible objects, the Fellowship and the Museum chose to produce a selection of useful household objects. This in itself is significant to how the Museum and Fellowship wanted to connect with Dickens consumers and how they wished to represent themselves. When Bill Brown talks of things, he highlights the significance of re-interpreting 'everyday' items; 'Released from the bond of being equipment, sustained outside the irreversibility of technological history, the object becomes something else.'<sup>514</sup> Thus, looking back at the choice of items and characters, we can interpret a new significance for how the Museum and Fellowship viewed their role within Dickensian cultural memory at the time. Dickens and his characters were seen as a part of the everyday and in the household.

In the 1920s, the Fellowship was going strong with the opening of the Museum in 1925. Two of Dickens's own children were still alive and active in Fellowship events and the Fellowship still had a few of the original founding members in prominent positions. The choice of characters then, being almost exclusively from three novels, *PP*, *OT*, and *MC* (barring only Trotty Veck and Micawber) might be due to the newness of the Museum and its connection with Dickens's earlier works. The focus on *Pickwick* especially, even including the very

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<sup>514</sup> Brown, p.15.

minor character of Perker, was to carry on into the exhaustive celebrations for *Pickwick's* centenary.

However, even with the resurgence of *Pickwick* in the 1930s, there is still little mention besides the cursory mention by Fitzgerald, of the *Pickwick* 'things' of the 1830s and 1840s. Instead, the museum and the Fellowship were releasing new memorabilia. The two *Pickwick* museum objects, the piece of *Pickwick* cotton (Figure 49), and the printed silk handkerchief (Figure 48) are both dated to the 1840s and have probably survived because they are both instantly recognisable as *Pickwick* memorabilia.



**Figure 48: Printed cotton scarf illustrated with central image of Charles Dickens surrounded by various characters (c.1839-1845). Image© Museum of London.**



**Figure 49: Piece of cotton cloth with illustrations from *The Pickwick Papers* (c.1840). Image© Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City.**

The significance of the remaining original *Pickwick* memorabilia is in their representation rather than signification, which perhaps says something about how

Dickens's characters have been celebrated and remembered. The things suggesting Dickens characters such as breeches and waistcoats become absorbed into popular culture and thus are left as ephemeral Victoriana rather than Dickens artefacts. On the other hand, memorabilia such as Figure 48 and Figure 49 as well as another surviving Pickwick things- fireplace tiles- retain their Dickensian significance outside their existence in nineteenth-century culture because of their prescriptive images directly referring to Dickens and Pickwick illustrations. These things' direct referencing to Dickens and the novel illustrations are perhaps why these things have been acknowledged as 'worthy' of museum collections. The fireplace tiles alone of the three can be found for purchase through auctions, probably due to the ceramic material being easier to preserve and their being nearly impossible to date accurately. That said, there are a few instances of Dickens character inspired things in popular culture being traceable.

Of course, while it is easy for us to sit, over a century and a half later, and bemoan the loss of such interesting things which might tell us something about Victorian culture or Dickens's public reception, it is likewise impossible to preserve everything from a time period. The 'tactics' of the museum, in this case the Charles Dickens Museum, and what they chose to acquire and display, can be summarized well by DeCerteau (from whom I have borrowed the term tactics). He says a place '[is] the base from where relations can be administered with an exteriority of targets' (we can read this 'place' as the museum):

The proper place is a victory of place over time [...] The partition of space permits a panoptic practice in which the look transforms strange forces into objects which one can observe and measure, therefore controlling and 'including' them in one's vision [...] to define the power of knowing by this capacity to transform the uncertainties of history into readable spaces.<sup>515</sup>

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<sup>515</sup> DeCerteau, p.5.

These terms DeCerteau has used- 'controlling', 'define', 'victory', and 'transform'-are words illustrative of the tactics of the museum. He furthermore defines these tactics:

Thus the institutions of ethnological or folklore research tend to retain from such practices and activities the merest physical or linguistic objects, which are then labelled according to their thematics and their places or origin, placed under glass, offered up for exegesis, and asked to disguise, beneath the peasant 'values' proposed for the edification or the curiosity or city-dwellers, the legitimization of an order which its custodians consider to be immemorial and 'natural.'<sup>516</sup>

Thus, it is important to either look at things outside of the museum circumstances in which they are displayed or kept or otherwise directly confront the precepts of the museum and how their tactics might affect the thing. Thus, when I have looked at Dickens things within museums, I will look at how they are displayed (or not displayed) and how this might affect how things and the character they represent are kept alive in (or hidden from) cultural memory.

In all the things that I have found online and in museums, there seems to be a dialogue in their preservation and reverence between the triumvirate I previously suggested of use, value, and affect. One way of breaking this relationship down to try to understand these things and their relationship to Dickens's characters is to look at certain kinds of things and how their interaction with each other develops an interpretation of the triumvirate. These related things are dolls and figurines. With dolls and figurines, there is a direct shift from dolls created to be played with and used versus figurines as art, into what in the current market is the same thing, that newly made dolls are as static and delicate as art figurines.

Why focus on things that were initially primarily for children? Dickens himself was very interested in childhood; many of his main characters are children. I have already mentioned the household items representing Dickens's characters. In

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<sup>516</sup> DeCerteau, p.4.

addition to these, there are numerous artistic interpretations of Dickens's characters (prints, illustrations, postcards) and collectible items such as cigarette cards which I could analyse. However dolls interest me because there seems to be a correlation between the purpose of the appropriation of Dickens's character (why certain characters were chosen over others) and their representation (how the characters were depicted and in what form). There is also a developmental shift in how these characters are thus remembered and used. Also, for mainly pragmatic reasons, the modern interest in collecting childhood ephemera and toys means that these are the things that are easiest to find. Why is it that there are accounts of Gamp umbrellas being for sale in Victorian England but none of these exist while what has survived are Sairey Gamp dolls? But also, looking at the idea of collecting and preserving childhood things also implies much about how we remember as readers and as collectors. Is it that in the move from being play things to being collectibles, these dolls and toys reflect how we have read Dickens throughout the nearly two hundred years of his novels being read; ultimately it might be that Dickens has himself shifted from pop culture icon into canon or from everyday into artefact? As John Plotz summarises, 'historically, the sheer ordinariness of this practice is perhaps the most valuable reading clue we have.'<sup>517</sup>

### **5.2.1. Dolls and Figurines (use v art)**

As an easy step from illustration to material object, both the doll and figurine have been and continue to be popular forms of expressing or representing Dickens's characters. However, while collectible figurines are still fairly easy to find and purchase, dolls have become either extremely rare or have become one-off works of

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<sup>517</sup> Plotz, *Sofa*, p. 113.

art rather than dolls for play. Looking at a few different examples of dolls and figurines can help us understand how cultural interest in certain characters may have changed over time and how the physical representation of remembering Dickens has developed from 'use' to reverence. A doll collector from 1909 stated, 'history could be taught by means of dolls. The future historian will have no difficulty in reconstructing our age if he finds merely a few toys in industry garrets or museums.'<sup>518</sup> We might find that this is true.

Except for the wax doll of Dolly Varden held in the Victoria & Albert Museum in London (which I look at in the end of this chapter), the oldest surviving dolls I have been able to find and correctly identify are early American dolls made by the Martha Chase company in the first two decades of the twentieth century. The Martha Chase Company started in 1899 in Rhode Island in the United States. Martha Jenks Chase began the company for a number of reasons; concerned with both the nature of childhood play and the materials used in dolls, Chase was reacting to the current interest in mechanical dolls and delicate china dolls. Chase, 'felt the inventors' interest in technology overwhelmed children's imaginative capacity to make the dolls "come alive"' as well as feeling that the elaborate fashions worn by some dolls, 'encouraged children to crave material things.'<sup>519</sup>

In addition to making her dolls in recognisable everyday clothes, and not exclusively wealthy fashions, Chase also wanted to make sure that her range of dolls was durable enough for childhood play and represented the children who owned them. Besides being unable to afford one, a child in a homestead in Oklahoma would not identify with a china doll wearing the latest Parisian silk dress. In its chapter on

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<sup>518</sup> Miriam Formanek-Brunell, *Made to Play House: Dolls and the Commercialization of American Girlhood, 1830-1930* (London: Yale University Press, 1993). p.6.

<sup>519</sup> Patricia Hogan, 'Play Stuff Blog', in *Strong Museum of Play* <[www.museumofplay.org/blog/play-stuff/2012/martha-jenks-chase](http://www.museumofplay.org/blog/play-stuff/2012/martha-jenks-chase)> [accessed 14 March 2015]

how to make dolls out of corn husks and flowers, *The American Girl's Handybook* from 1893 reminds its readers of the difference between cloth or handmade dolls and china dolls:

which might be hugged in rapturous moments of affection without fear of dislocating some of its numerous joints, or putting out of order its speaking or crying apparatus; and might in times of forgetfulness be dropped on the floor and suffer no injury thereby.<sup>520</sup>

Unlike the delicate china and bisque dolls common at the time, Chase made her dolls with lighter and softer stockinet cotton (as opposed to the common sawdust stuffing) and 'painted her dolls with insoluble paints to make them washable'.<sup>521</sup> Chase designed and developed her dolls with the direct goal of making them durable, light, and soft enough for play. While many of her early dolls were made to look like real children, she soon began making specific character dolls like the Dickens dolls, following the fashion 'at the turn of the twentieth century, toy makers introduced dolls based on characters from history and popular children's books to promote gender-neutral doll play'.<sup>522</sup>

Of the Dickens collection dolls released, I have been able to trace Sairey Gamp, Mr Micawber, and Little Nell. With one look, two of these dolls are fairly recognisable. These are, a Mr Micawber from 1900 (Figure 50) and a Sairey Gamp from 1900 (Figure 51). Compared to the illustrations of both of these characters in their original novels, both of these dolls have certain familiar characteristics. Micawber, even to the untrained eye, is recognisable as a 'Dickens-like' character for his bulging belly, his glasses, his Victorian clothes, and his pocket watch. This Micawber might be confused with Pickwick, since Pickwick often has the same

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<sup>520</sup> Linda Beard and B. Adelia Beard, *The American Girl's Handybook: How to Amuse Yourself and Others*, archive.org edn (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1893). pp.169-170.

<sup>521</sup> Hogan.

<sup>522</sup> Hogan.

features (separated mainly by their style of hat), but even if he was Pickwick the choice of either character presents the same interesting images in a doll. While dolls were often beautifully dressed young girls, with flowing curls as in the now iconic Béb  doll from the Jumeau company in France in the mid nineteenth century<sup>523</sup>, this Martha Chase doll is instead not only a man (when ‘boy’ dolls are often rare finds) but is an older character. Micawber has a balding head, when dolls of the time either had curled or plaited hair or bonnets (on the cheaper or handmade dolls). This Micawber also has the rounded pot belly of the character; this presents an interesting image of a young girl playing with a potbellied older man doll. However, in this case perhaps it was not the image of the character but the character itself which was attractive to the doll maker and subsequent buyers.

Besides the miscellaneous young boy dolls made by the Martha Chase Company, Chase also made George Washington and Roger Williams. These two male characters were chosen for their admirable qualities, qualities which doll makers wanted to extend to doll play. Miriam Formanek-Brunell points out that Martha Chase and similar doll-makers in the post-civil war years, ‘created dolls whose qualities were rooted in the domestic values and norms of the antebellum households in which they grew up’.<sup>524</sup> Mr Micawber is often a favourite among readers of Dickens; his humour and kindness towards the destitute and orphaned David Copperfield are admirable qualities. However, Micawber’s constant state of impecuniousness and his inability to take care of his family or treat David as the child he is are not necessarily qualities to instil in children’s play. However, perhaps

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<sup>523</sup> Before talking about American doll makers of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, Miriam Formanek-Brunell mentions the European dolls in contrast to what would become the popular American made dolls; ‘Some of the most expensive French fashion dolls in the 1870s and 1880 arrived with fully packed trunks, often tripling the price of the doll alone. French and German dolls- with hourglass figurines and b b s, idealised and romanticized [sic] representations of European bourgeois girlhood- flooded U.S. markets at a time when most Americans began to enjoy increasing affluence.’ (Formanek-Brunell, p.16).

<sup>524</sup> Formanek-Brunell, p.62.



it is the very childish behaviour which Micawber inhabits which makes him a perfect child's play thing. Although the character itself is bald and overweight and middle-aged, children can identify with the 'flaws' in his character. As F.R and Q.D. Leavis write in *Dickens the Novelist*, 'The significance of Micawber is his Micawberism'.<sup>525</sup> The Leavises mention that Micawber, despite not being employed in a creative capacity such as art or authorship, is in fact a perfect archetype for the creative type because his 'contempt for the morrow, faith in the future and enjoyment of the present are essential attributes of the creative mind'.<sup>526</sup> These characteristics could also be said to be natural to childhood.

In fact, creativity was often cited as an important concern for doll play in the nineteenth century. Doll historians often cite the awkwardness of young children playing with heavy and delicate china dolls which sometimes required a wheeled base to allow children to actually move the dolls around.<sup>527</sup> Besides the weight, creative play was a major focus for many women and the choice of producing a male doll in the character of Micawber might have been to extend the range of imaginative play for girls into adult characters and male characters. Martha Chase is cited as a main driving force in contemplating doll play for boys and with male dolls; 'women like Chase set out to reform the doll in an effort to promote doll play among girls and boys. With the dolls she created, Chase was not only redefining what it meant to be a girl but what it meant to be a boy as well'.<sup>528</sup>

The Sairey Gamp doll from 1900 is held in the Wolverhampton Archives (WAVE) and is currently on display in Bantock House Museum on the outskirts of

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<sup>525</sup> F R Leavis and Q D Leavis, *Dickens the Novelist* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972). p.127.

<sup>526</sup> Leavis, p.128.

<sup>527</sup> Miriam Formanek-Brunell cites a nineteenth-century tale of a little girl thinking, 'it [the doll] might be heavy, and for a moment the recollection of her little cousin's French doll came across her, for that doll, thought very slender and genteel, was so heavy that she moved about on rollers.' (Formanek-Brunell, p.70).

<sup>528</sup> Formanek-Brunell, p.62.

Wolverhampton. It is part of a larger toy and doll collection donated to the museum by Daisy St Claire Mander. While the WAVE website notes that many of the dolls in the collection represent different cultures and were purchased by the original owner during travels around the world, the Martha Chase Mrs Gamp doll in the collection is one of the dolls that were personal childhood toys. This is one of the only Dickens dolls on display. However, it is only in the small information book in the room that the doll is labelled as Sairey Gamp; none of the toys or dolls on display in the nursery of Bantock House have information labels on or near them. I found the room's information book hidden under coats on a table in the centre of the room. While other rooms in the house all have similar information booklets and are probably used by visitors wanting further details, the nursery is a different set up; it is decidedly less 'museum' like. While I was visiting, a school group was occupying most of the nursery and a museum employee was telling them all about old toys. Much of the nursery is set up for children's interaction such as trying on costumes. The collections in the room are limited to one glass cabinet along one wall. One wonders then, how many people do pick up and peruse the extra information in this room? While the Sairey Gamp doll may have been recognisable to me, put in a situation surrounded by other toys and dolls from numerous time periods, she may lose her significance as a Dickens doll. Surrounded by dolls collected as travel souvenirs, Sairey looks like an ordinary Victorian doll. Still, why choose the drunken nurse/midwife of *MC* to have as a childhood doll?

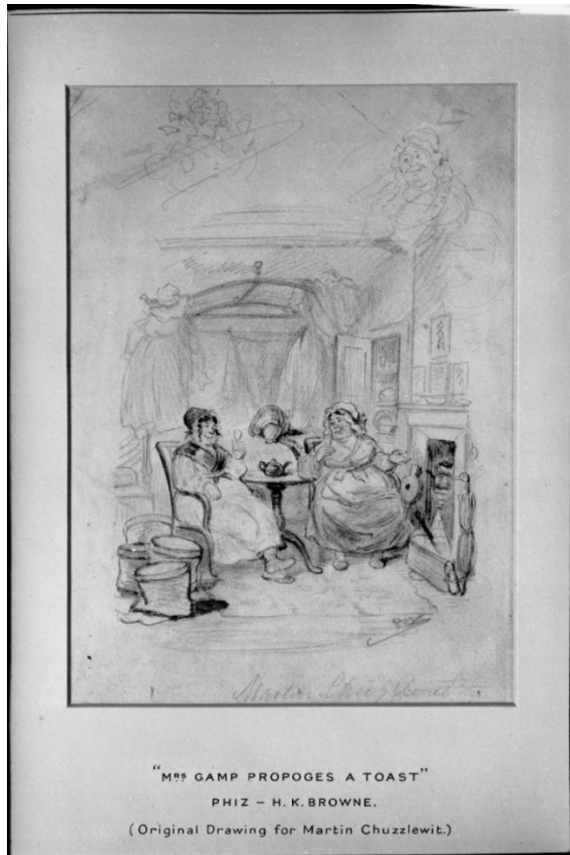


**Figure 50: Mr Micawber doll, value \$4,500, by Martha Chase. (c.1900). Image© Theriaults.**



**Figure 51: Sairey Gamp doll, by Martha Chase (c.1900). Image© Wolverhampton Museums, Galleries, and Archives (WAVE).**

Not as beloved now as she was to the Victorian and turn of the century readers, Sairey Gamp, like Micawber, is an interesting choice for a doll. Martha Chase has, in the Mrs Gamp doll, decided to play down the features many artists love about Mrs Gamp, her grotesque features, sometimes inebriated attitude, and fairly ragged clothes. Even the Cruikshank illustration of Figure 52 and the close up of Figure 53 show Mrs Gamp's smiling face and smoother complexion in a better light than later illustrators. Take, for instance, the vintage Mrs Gamp puppet of Figure 54 found on the website Etsy. Her wrinkled face and grimace made with papier-mâché are much more characteristic of the illustrations of Gamp in *MC*, even more so the later illustrations of Mrs Gamp popularised by Barnard and Kyd. Clearly, while the puppet might have been made in the tradition of Punch and Judy shows, where grotesque and comic characters are the central focus, the Martha Chase doll, while wanting to pay homage to a loved character, decided to keep only the features which might be lovable to a young girl at play, such as the floral bonnet, the shawl, and Victorian dress. Originally, the doll would also have come with a 'gamp' umbrella.



**Figure 52: *Mrs Gamp proposes a toast*, by Phiz (1844). Image© Charles Dickens Museum**



**Figure 53: Inset of Mrs Gamp illustration and study, by Phiz (1844). Image© Charles Dickens Museum**



**Figure 54: Sarah Gamp puppet, by Unknown (unknown date). Image© Maureen England**

While the character of Mrs Gamp was immediately scandalous as a symbol of the state of midwifery and nursing in the mid-nineteenth century, her character was not consistently portrayed in a negative light. Besides the appropriation of her name as a moniker for umbrella, Mrs Gamp was used in political cartoons and painted in 1882 by John Everett Millais. But Millais's Mrs Gamp was far from the inebriated figure of the novel. Millais instead painted 'Little Mrs Gamp', a young girl, fresh-faced with ringlets sticking out of her bonnet. The wood-engraving of Figure 55 was printed in *The Graphic* in 1882. Instead of the bulbous form of the comedic Sairey Gamp, Millais has taken the name from its absorption into popular culture as 'umbrella' and recreated a young, innocent Mrs Gamp- although the keeping of the Mrs instead of changing the name to Miss is an interesting choice for a picture of a young girl. Whether Millais's painting and subsequent lithographs were the first to represent the character of Mrs Gamp in a completely different light, they were not the last.

In 1894, London publishers Ernest Nister published a little children's book of rhymes called *Little Mrs Gamp* (Figure 56). Again keeping the 'Mrs' the booklet was twelve pages long and cut in the shape of the young girl dressed in pink frills illustrating the cover, and she is holding an umbrella. Besides the first poem of the book, the rhymes are various children's nursery rhymes. The first rhyme is the only one to mention a connection to the name Gamp. The four lines are:

It's a big umbrella, for  
 It gives such a stamp, sir,  
 And the boys cry aloud, 'There  
 Goes little Mrs Gamp!' Sir.<sup>529</sup>

Millais and Ernest Nister's Gamps are undoubtedly inspired by the appropriation of the name to mean umbrella but the use of the title 'Mrs' instead of Miss shows that

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<sup>529</sup> *Little Mrs Gamp* (London: Ernest Nister, 1894).

both are still trying to keep some connection, beyond that of the umbrella, with Dickens's Gamp.

While Martha Chase's softer Mrs Gamp doll is not as childlike as the Millais engraving or the book of Nursery rhymes, the softening of the features and slight gentrification of the clothes in doll, image, and book shows that the character was so liked by the reading public that they wanted to soften her for a children's audience, eliminating the drunkenness, the grotesque features and shabby clothing. Mrs. Gamp's character was so adopted by the public that features of her character were changed by that same public. What remained, the quirky female attached to her ubiquitous umbrella was, although different, still Mrs Gamp. The case of Mrs Gamp's dolls shows that a character need not be appropriated as exact to the 'original' to be recognised and still archontic.

Unlike the Mr Micawber and Mrs Gamp dolls by Martha Chase, Little Nell is much more the image of the young girl's doll. Additionally, I have been able to trace numerous Martha Chase dolls tagged as Little Nell or Nell dolls whereas the Micawber and Gamp dolls are much rarer. Perhaps, as a more attractive doll, Nell sold more and more have survived? Another possibility for Nell's numerous dolls might be a problem of identity. While the Micawber and Gamp dolls are much more recognisable as Dickens characters, Nell has a more general look. The doll of Figure 57 is the most fully dressed in costume which fits what Nell might have worn. However, I have found other dolls tagged as 'Nell' or 'Little Nell' which have different styles or colours of hair, different clothes, or no clothes with them at all. One of the dolls is wearing her hair in plaits, with no bonnet, and is dressed in a young girl's dress more reminiscent of the 1920s than 1840s.





**Figure 55: *Little Mrs Gamp*, by John Everett Millais (1882).** Image© British Museum Archives.



**Figure 56: *Little Mrs Gamp*, pub. Ernest Nister (1894).** Image ©EBay



**Figure 57: Little Nell doll, value \$948, by Martha Chase (c.1920).** Image© Skinner Inc.



One of the challenges in manufacturing a doll representative of a character fixed in time and place is, of course, the changing fashion and interests of customers. The Martha Chase Company made dolls from the 1890s through to the 1970s. Their Dickens dolls were in their first series of production from the 1890s to the mid-1920s. The Micawber and Gamp doll I have found are estimated to be in the very early years of production for the company whereas the Little Nell and Nell dolls are found up through the 1930s. This be because the interest in Micawber and Gamp waned while the interest in the tragic Little Nell remained strong. The character of Nell was the only character of the three to die in the original books, but the flexibility of her image and morality meant that appropriation created possibilities for adaptation while the other two more ‘characterised’ characters did not. Micawber and Gamp are both recognisable through their attitude and their clothes. While, as we have seen, Sairey Gamp’s features are toned down in her doll, both characters would require much more narrative development in order to remove them from their characteristics; this sort of appropriation might only be possible through fanfiction and other media where narrative beyond image is possible (as we have seen in the previous chapter).

However Nell, is more a representative of a type without a single image. In other words, Nell and her death are tragic because it, in a way, is a symbol for other young girls in tragic situations dying every day in Victorian England. As a symbol then, Nell can take on many different embodiments. Even removing her tragic death and retaining the symbol of being a representative young girl means her appropriation into a doll is possible with any kind of dress or hair that a young girl might have at the time- thus, Nell becomes the representative young girl of the 1920s if need be. Another reason for Nell being an interesting doll with which young girls could play was her socioeconomic class. A Nell doll did not need any fancy silk

dresses or portmanteau to accompany her character. Unlike other young women in Dickens's novels like Dora Spenlow or even Agnes Wickfield, Nell did not need fashionable clothes to match the time period. Her poor yet simple life could be adapted to any poor young girl's situation, even across the Atlantic in America. As the Beards wrote in their *American Girl's Handbook*, 'so it is best to leave the city doll in her city home, safe out of harm's way and manufacture, from materials to be found in the country, one more suited to country surroundings'.<sup>530</sup> Nell embodied the simple tastes and admirable qualities to be encouraged in young girls. Thus, her representation in Martha Chase's dolls changed through the decades in which she was manufactured so young girls could continue to identify with her and be inspired by her through play.

Whether these dolls softened the dishonourable qualities of the characters they appropriated or adapted the character to be more universal, in each case the choice of character and what that choice meant to childhood play at the time is an important consideration in how Dickens's characters are appropriated and remembered. However, the Martha Chase Company was not the only company to embrace the representation of Dickens's characters in dolls meant for play. In the early years of the Madame Alexander Company, the Dickens characters appropriated for dolls were exclusively Dickens's little darlings.

The resurgence of interest in Dickens in the 1920s and 1930s coinciding with the opening of the Charles Dickens Museum and leading up to the centenary of *Pickwick* saw another range of dolls released by new doll maker, Madame Alexander. Now a producer of highly collectible dolls some of the first series of dolls produced by Beatrice Alexander Berhman were a series of Dickens characters, a few characters from *Little Women* by Louisa May Alcott, and Snow White. Now mainly plastic, the

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<sup>530</sup> Beard, p.170.

first dolls by the Madame Alexander house were made primarily of cloth. Unlike Martha Chase, Madame Alexander decided to stay away from the more eccentric Dickens characters and instead focus exclusively on what critics have now dubbed, Dickens's 'Little Darlings.' The result of this choice is that all of the dolls have the same face (similar facial features and expressions became a trade mark of the Madame Alexander dolls even today) and are only distinguishable by their Victorian style clothing and the tags sewn into the seams giving the character name. While these tags are mainly used by doll collectors to authenticate and date, they are extremely helpful in identifying what could be a confusingly similar choice of characters. The series contains: Little Nell, Little Em'ly, Agnes, Little Dorrit, Oliver Twist, Pip, David Copperfield, and Tiny Tim.

The images of Figure 58 and Figure 59 are some of the better conditioned Madame Alexander dolls from the 1930s which are modelled after Dickens's characters.<sup>531</sup> As anyone can see, the faces of all the dolls are nearly identical with minor variations in the blush of the cheeks, the size of the nose, or the direction of the gaze. While the faces have changed slightly over the decades, Madame Alexander dolls are still recognisable by their childlike faces and slightly serious expressions.

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<sup>531</sup> The only doll I have been able to trace of Pip did not have a very clear image and so unfortunately I have not added him into the image of the boy dolls.



**Figure 58: Dolls: Little Dorrit (c.1934), Little Nell (c.1934), Agnes (c.1930s), Little Em'ly (c.1934s), by Madame Alexander. Images© Skinner Inc. and Charlotte Henrichs.**



**Figure 59: Dolls: Tiny Tim (c.1934), David Copperfield (c.1934), David Copperfield (c.1934), and Oliver Twist (c.1934), by Madame Alexander. Images© Skinner Inc. and Theriaults.**

With these dolls there is another separation between the doll and the character and that is the manufacturing brand. Although at the time, the Madame Alexander brand was fairly new, there was still a focus on creating associative features in the dolls. The *Little Women* dolls, for example, released around the same

time as the Dickens dolls are nearly identical to the Agnes doll in face and clothes. The Dickens dolls then, or indeed all of the character dolls created by the company at the time, were representing both the characters and the brand. In addition, although Madame Alexander created male dolls in David and the others, the similar features between the male and female characters is symptomatic of the increasing division between girl and boy childhood play. Formanek-Brunell notes that in the pre-war years, ‘manufacturers imbued dolls with feminine attributes’ because of the increasing sex role stereotypes enforced on young children.<sup>532</sup> Where Martha Chase was making dolls for both boys and girls, Madame Alexander was manufacturing dolls for an increasingly singularly feminine market.

The only doll produced recently by the Madame Alexander Company of a Dickens character is Tiny Tim. The 1990s also saw a Scrooge and Marley doll. However these were part of the more limited range of dolls from the company which has now split its manufacturing between dolls for play and dolls for display. This shift in doll design and production was happening in the 1960s and 1970s.

The third company I want to look at for Dickens dolls is Peggy Nisbet. Known for producing a fairly exhaustive range of collectible royal occasion dolls (e.g. Royal Weddings, Coronations) and a few historical dolls (e.g. Henry VIII and his wives, Nell Gwyn, and George and Martha Washington), the Peggy Nisbet Company also produced a few Dickensian Dolls, the most popular of which is the set produced for the release of the film *Oliver!* in 1968. The important difference to note in these dolls is seen written on a box of the full set of six dolls, ‘Inspired by the characters in Lionel Bart’s *Oliver!*’ (see Figure 60). In other words, these dolls, while representing Dickens’s characters, are mediated in their representation through the film production. Their primary representation is of the actors and costumes from the film

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<sup>532</sup> Formanek-Brunell, p.104.

*Oliver!* rather than to the characters as directly described by Dickens and drawn by Cruikshank.

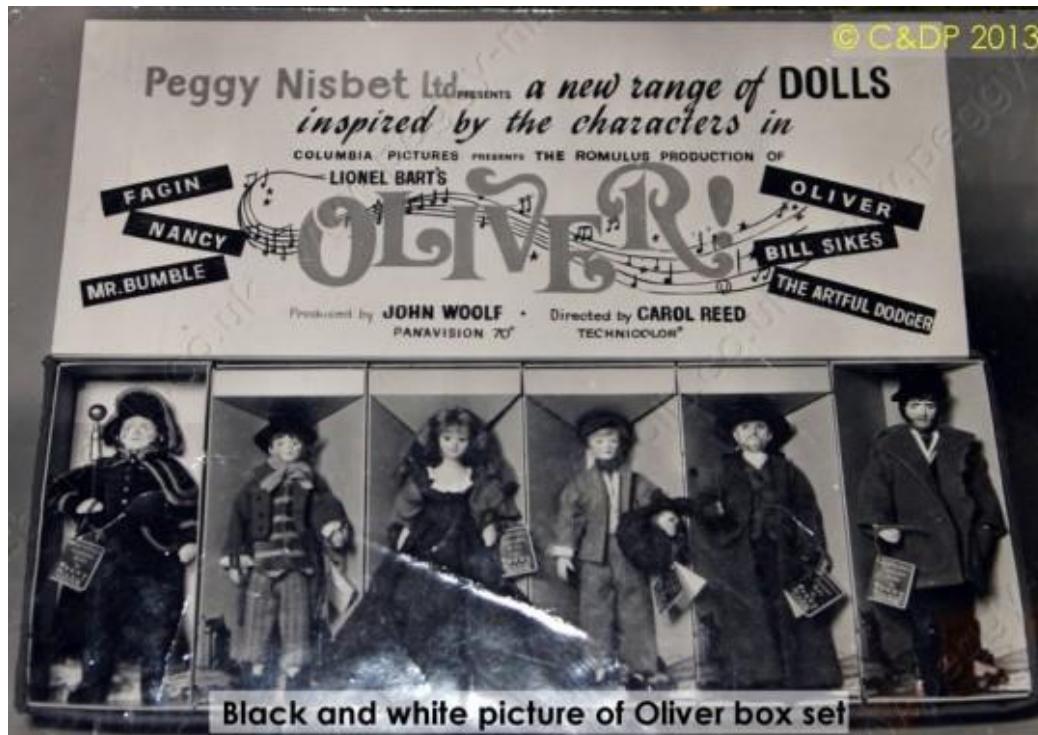


Figure 60: Set of *Oliver!* dolls, by Peggy Nisbet (1968). Image©[www.peggy-nisbet-dolls.co.uk](http://www.peggy-nisbet-dolls.co.uk)



Figure 61: Other Dickens dolls, by Peggy Nisbet. Image©[www.peggy-nisbet-dolls.co.uk](http://www.peggy-nisbet-dolls.co.uk)

But the *Oliver Twist* dolls are not the only Dickens dolls that the Peggy Nisbet Company released. In 1985 and 1975 the company also released a Mr Pickwick doll, a Bob Cratchit and Tiny Tim doll set, and a Mr Micawber seen in Figure 61. The Mr Micawber doll has a similar reference point as the *Oliver!* dolls because, while he is named Mr Micawber, the doll was in fact designed to represent the actor W.C. Fields as Mr Micawber in the 1935 film production of *DC*. There have been other dolls released by other companies made to represent W.C. Fields as various characters as well. Similarly, the Pickwick doll is said to be representative of James Hayter's portrayal of Mr Pickwick in the 1952 film of *PP*.<sup>533</sup>

While these dolls were made in the late twentieth century, their mediation through actors and particular productions of character are reminiscent of the popularisation of actor dolls in the 1920s through to the 1950s. Arguably, it is the proliferation of Shirley Temple dolls, Jackie Coogan dolls, and other dolls representing child actors during the early decades of cinema which saw the decline of the 'book' character doll. Even the Madame Alexander Company, which had embraced Dickens characters and the characters from *Little Women* began to change the look of certain book character dolls to fit the film representations of the same characters. While the Dickens characters were not changed or even re-released, characters like Dorothy (from *The Wizard of Oz*) and Alice (from *Alice in Wonderland*) were given new clothes to fit the costumes of the characters in the 1939 film of *Wizard of Oz* and the 1951 Disney film of *Alice in Wonderland*. Thus, in 1968 when Peggy Nisbet released the 'collectible' *Oliver!* dolls, the company was merely following in an increasingly popular practice of using film productions as primary source material. Even contemporary artists, as I will show later in this section, are

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<sup>533</sup> 'What the Dickens?', in *Peggy Nisbet Dolls* <<http://www.peggy-nisbet-dolls.co.uk/a-nisbet-miscellany/what-the-dickens/>> [accessed 3 October 2015]



still creating art dolls representing film productions of character rather than using novel illustrations as source.

While these ‘celebrity’ dolls were designed to match an actor in a certain part, and often the dolls were sold with both the actor’s name and character name (as most of the Shirley Temple dolls were), this was not always the case. In talking about celebrity dolls, John Axe points out that at times the connection to celebrity was obvious in the design but not marketed as such:

All celebrity dolls are not portraits. Some of them are difficult to identify. Many of the dolls of entertainment personalities, for example, are based on a character the celebrity played, rather than being a rendition of the person’s usual physical appearance. Such dolls were neither sold nor advertised using the celebrity’s name.<sup>534</sup>

The doll manufacturers were counting on the image of the dolls to sell rather than using the celebrity name as a selling point. At times, this was because rival companies may not have held the contract for a certain star’s name. The important thing was that the dolls were recognisable whether by costume or face or hair (as was often the case with many Shirley Temple dolls). If we are looking at book characters mediated through movie stars then, there is now a separation between representation and recognition. Dickens’s characters have begun to be thought of as more recognisable in combination with certain film productions together with certain costumes. Where the Martha Chase dolls had mainly illustrations and possibly theatre productions as reference points to characters and so she chose two more eccentric characters, Madame Alexander and Peggy Nisbet had film as a reference point. If we are still thinking in terms of the archontic in cultural memory, then it is with the advent of film production dolls where Dickens’s characters begin to

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<sup>534</sup> John Axe, *The Encyclopedia of Celebrity Dolls* (Cumberland: Hobby House Press Inc, 1983). p.xviii.



branch out in cultural memory into new representations not hindered by plot or novel as illustrations may be.

But there is another interesting departure for the Peggy Nisbet dolls from the earlier Dickens dolls. Regardless of inspiration for the look of the dolls, the Peggy Nisbet dolls stand at about 20cm tall<sup>535</sup>. Unlike the Martha Chase Mrs Gamp doll which is a much taller 38.5cm<sup>536</sup>, these later dolls are closer to the size of the figurines or the 'action figures' of modern collectibles. Too large to be doll's house dolls but much smaller than traditional dolls, these dolls are also designed with static limbs and attached clothes. Therefore, unlike the Madame Alexander dolls or Martha Chase dolls, the Peggy Nisbet dolls are not designed and sold as toys meant to be played with. Many of the Peggy Nisbet dolls available on internet auction sites are also sold with their original boxes showing that even when originally bought, they were not separated from their boxes and mostly likely were placed on display rather than used in a nursery.

Even within the span of less than a full century, the development of Dickens dolls is from useful playthings to visual collectibles. The progression in the world of Dickens dolls within the last 40 years has been even more toward artistic or collectible figurine; while still being called 'dolls' these modern dolls are often unique art pieces rather than mass produced toys, and even then the larger companies manufacturing the occasional Dickens doll often releases said doll as a 'limited edition' or special production doll. The more mass-produced dolls released in the last 40 years are fairly selective in their choice of character, staying largely with the

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<sup>535</sup> This is using the Mr Pickwick doll as a standard reference for all the Peggy Nisbet dolls as they were all similarly sized. The reason behind this is that the Mr Pickwick doll is owned by me and so I have been able to examine it closely while I have not had access to the other dolls.

<sup>536</sup> 'Rag Doll', in *Wolverhampton Arts and Museums*  
 <[http://wamscollections.collectionspress.com/collections/getrecord/WAGMU\\_D63/](http://wamscollections.collectionspress.com/collections/getrecord/WAGMU_D63/)> [accessed 16 January 2015]

characters from *A Christmas Carol*. This move from plaything to collectible directly follows the shifts in how Dickens is read by society.

At the turn of the century, Dickens was still considered a household name. Indeed, often his works were criticised by Edwardian and modern readers as being overly sentimental, Victorian, and trite.<sup>537</sup> This view was shifting in the 1920s with the opening of the museum in London and further in the 1930s with the centenary of *Pickwick*. Dickens was beginning to be read seriously again. By the release of the Peggy Nisbet dolls in 1968, Dickens was no longer read in childhood. Thus, when Dickens dolls were created, they, like Dickens's novels, were to be treasured as a literary collectible by adults and not played with by children.

However, these dolls we have looked at up until now, whether created as collectibles or toys, have been mediated by a consumer interest. This is not the case for artistry dolls, created as one-off pieces as either fan art by amateurs or by highly skilled doll makers. These two groups tend to have not only a difference in skill level and form of representation (detailed or abstract), but also a difference in motivation.

We have already looked at fan culture in the previous chapter and in this section. I would like to look at fan-created memorabilia in the form of hand-made dolls and figurines. Interestingly, as I have said earlier, the practice of fan-created dolls and figurines is not unique to modern amateur artists but was contemporary to Dickens's publications. For this historical background, I am looking at three things in the collections of the Charles Dickens Museum, a small wax figurine of The Fat Boy from *PP*, a collection of crepe-paper dolls of various characters used as place settings, and a set of two cloth dolls of Mr Pickwick and The Spinster Aunt from *PP*.

Using the triumvirate relationship of object-subject-affect, fan-created objects present an interesting physical representation of a fan's relationship with a given

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<sup>537</sup> See chapter Two.

character. Thus, even while these things are ultimately for sale and are given a monetary value, the ‘value’ of the object lies not in the point of sale, but in the act of creation itself. The same is true for artist dolls as well but to a varying degree since artists either have a predilection for certain time periods or types of characters they create or are also at other times influenced by the market and what type of character they can sell. Tracing the progression of these things through time, we see an associated change in the public interest in characters from the 1830s through to modern day. Of the earlier dolls held in the collection of the CDM, three of them are chosen from Dickens’s first novel *PP*, and the set of crepe dolls is a wide selection of nine characters from numerous Dickens novels. In comparison, the modern dolls found on Etsy are appropriations of Miss Havisham from *GE*.

The first item I would like to look at is a small wax figurine of The Fat Boy. The figurine, along with the two Pickwick dolls, was found in the off-site collection of the CDM. This means that these things have been removed from the directly accessible collection in the main museum and are only accessible by special request; they require time and money to bring them to the museum. Deemed either not relevant enough or not valuable enough according to the current policies of the museum to be on site, until recently the items in the off-site store were not even fully catalogued. Whether this says more about the previous practices of the museum or the changing interests in the collections is debatable but surely at one time this small figurine of The Fat Boy was important enough to be accepted into the collections of the museum; the character itself must have captured the imagination of the artist enough to spend time creating the detailed figurine.



**Figure 62: Inset of Fat Boy figurine, by Unknown (1839 or 1889). Image© Charles Dickens Museum**



**Figure 63: Fat Boy figurine, by Unknown (1839 or 1889). Image© Charles Dickens Museum**

Very little is known about this figurine except for the inscription on the base. The date of the inscription could be 1889 or 1839. If it is 1839, then the figurine was made only three years after *PP* had its first number published. The name in the

inscription could be that of the artist. The character of The Fat Boy continues to be popular in ceramic figurines as do many Pickwick characters. However, given that this figurine could be one of the earliest as well as the fact that it is handmade shows how from the novel's publication, The Fat Boy was a character that did and still does capture readers' attention. If the date is 1889 however, the significance of The Fat Boy is directly in relation to the publication of *PP* but is instead a reflection of the overall celebration of Dickens's works after the author's death.

The second selection of fan-created dolls is a glass case holding nine small dolls made of crepe paper and wire representing different Dickens characters from various novels. The choice of characters alone poses questions. Neither exclusively major nor minor characters, and not even chosen from amongst the most frequently appropriated characters from the novels often represented, we will unfortunately not know why certain characters were chosen over others since the records for the dolls are very sparse. Some of the dolls are characters which are still often appropriated into other forms in culture such as Scrooge, Dolly Varden (whom I will say more on later), and the ubiquitous Miss Havisham. A few others are characters which were once quite popularised but interest in whom has fallen off in recent decades such as Alfred Mantalini and Sairey Gamp. However, the remaining four characters are not often chosen for appropriations or are often over-looked by other more prominent characters in the novels from which they originate. For example, the person or people who made the crepe-paper dolls chose to make Ham Peggotty from *DC* rather than, as we have already seen, the much more commonly appropriated character from the same novel, Mr Micawber. Likewise, instead of choosing Bob Cratchit and Tiny Tim to accompany Scrooge, Mrs Cratchit is instead in the set of dolls, holding aloft a Christmas pudding almost as if reminding the viewer from what story she originates.



**Figure 64: Dinner Place-Cards, Uncommercial Travellers' Club (1935). Image© Charles Dickens Museum.**

Whatever the reason for the chosen selection of characters to represent, the person who has made the characters has clearly made them with a deep appreciation for their characters and the stories from which they originate. Alfred Mantalini, for example, is dressed in bright colours, and is positioned holding outwards a bolt of fabric. The positioning of the tail of his belt and the flowing backward of his cape suggest dramatic movement in the character although the doll is obviously static. Clearly, the creator has thought about the eccentric and erratic movement and energy of the character. In another such instance, unlike the painted rosy cheeks and demure smiles of many of the dolls, the face of the Scrooge doll is pinched and wrinkled; devoid of blushing or smile, he stares directly outward at the viewer, almost defiantly, as he holds aloft a single candle and clutches his thin dressing gown about him.



**Figure 65: Close up of crepe paper doll of Mr Alfred Mantalini, Uncommercial Travellers' Club (1935). Image© Charles Dickens Museum.**



**Figure 66: Close up of crepe paper doll of Scrooge, Uncommercial Travellers' Club (1935). Image© Charles Dickens Museum**

The single note of provenance given to the glass case of crepe-paper dolls is a small plaque on the front which reads: Presented by the Uncommercial Travellers' Club, 1935. A little research into the club revealed that it was a club formed by Leslie Cyril Staples in the 1920s.<sup>538</sup> The other members of the club were all also members of the Dickens Fellowship. The Uncommercial Travellers' Club, or the U.T.C. as they sometimes referred to themselves, enjoyed taking short day excursions to locales in Dickens's novels; 'They are always wandering in town and country as Dickens would have done [...] but they are a close society, and such meetings are private' reads one small passage in the *Dickensian* about the U.T.C.<sup>539</sup> While the U.T.C. were not directly associated with the Fellowship, they did help raise funds for the Charles Dickens Museum. In one instance, they produced a private amateur theatrical performance of *The Importance of Being Ernest* by Oscar Wilde and raised over

<sup>538</sup> Staples would later come to be an editor of the *Dickensian* and prominent member of the Dickens Fellowship.

<sup>539</sup> 'The Uncommercial Travellers' Club', *Dickensian*, 31 (1934), 66. p.66.

twenty pounds for the museum funds.<sup>540</sup> The gift of the paper dolls is dated to ten years after this performance and the inception of the club.

The acquisition record for the set of figures mentions that they were originally used as place settings at a dinner for members of the U.T.C. There is no information on who may have made the dolls- whether they were made by a member of the club or by an artist on commission. If they were used as place settings, there is also no further information on whether they had only the character name printed on them or accompanied other name cards. Since the U.T.C. was a small and exclusive club, it seems reasonable that further name plates were unnecessary which implies that the choice of character may have been in connection with certain members of the club. Perhaps the members chose their favourite characters as representatives at dinner? Perhaps club members even went by nicknames? There is evidence of many Pickwick Clubs using character names from *PP* as titles for members of the club, with Pickwick generally being President.<sup>541</sup> We cannot know for sure why these characters were chosen, and can only speculate. However, each line of speculation could lead to different conclusions and understandings about the place of Dickens's characters in the memory of some of his most devoted fans.

In addition to the date on the plaque, these dolls can also be approximately dated due to their very style. In the 1930s, crepe-paper dolls were quite a fashionable home craft. A famous doll maker (maker of artistic dolls not toy dolls), Bernard Ravca, was known for making crepe-paper and papier mache figurines as well as his cloth stockinet dolls. In fact, Ravca did make a few Dickens figurines himself.

The U.T.C., as a group of members of the Dickens Fellowship, obviously had a passion for Dickens and his works. The very fact that they felt the Fellowship itself

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<sup>540</sup> 'The Dickens House Balance Sheet', *Dickensian*, 32 (1935), 57. p.57.

<sup>541</sup> See Chapter Four for more on the Pickwick Clubs and their members' nicknames.



was not enough of an organisation with which to share their enthusiasm of Dickens is enough to prove the community of fandom these friends felt. While not much information remains of the exclusive and private group, their fandom is left physically embodied in the delicate and detailed character dolls they gifted to the CDM.

The last two dolls in the CDM collection I would like to look at are two cloth dolls attached to wooden stands which were found in the offsite store collections. These dolls, unlike the U.T.C. dolls do have an inscription on the base of each naming their character and their maker. The dolls are of Mr Pickwick and The Spinster Aunt, both from *PP*. These dolls in Figure 67, like the Fat Boy figurine and the crepe-paper dolls are attached to their own wooden bases and are fastened into static positions with their clothing attached. Thus, they, like the others, are meant as doll-figurines rather than as toy-dolls.



**Figure 67: Mr Pickwick and Spinster Aunt dolls, by Edith Russell (date unknown). Image© Charles Dickens Museum.**

These dolls were made by an artist called Edith Russell. Since studying these two dolls, I have found other dolls made by Russell online including other styled Pickwicks, a Miss Flite, and a Sam Weller. This type of doll has also been called costume dolls. The numerous differently dressed *Pickwick* dolls by this artist still available through various online auction sites shows that either Russell was very keen on the character or she knew the doll would be marketable, or perhaps both.

I would like to now compare the modern figurine dolls to these older dolls. One doll artist who sells both through Etsy and her own website is Julie Campbell. Among a myriad of generic Victoriana figurines, Campbell has made dolls of characters from *A Christmas Carol*, Mr. Pecksniff, Miss Flite, Charles Dickens himself, and two different Miss Havishams (the one of the left is inspired by Helena Bonham Carter's portrayal of the character in the 2012 film production of *GE*); Campbell's two Havishams can be seen in Figure 68. Campbell describes her figurines as dolls yet they are, in every other definition, figurines. Her dolls have hand-sculpted faces, intricate clothing, and are fixed to bases or stands but often their limbs are poseable. Campbell takes commissions as well as selling her figures at conventions and online. On her website, Campbell describes herself as a 'self-taught artist' and is a certified artisan for miniatures.<sup>542</sup> While she often calls her work 'dolls', she also states that while limbs are often posable, their clothing is intricately designed and sewn onto the figures and so not removable. While we do not know why Edith Russell chose her interest in Pickwick, Campbell does mention on her website a reason for her interest in Dickens and other Victorian and storybook characters, 'I was a voracious reader and would try to bring characters from the stories I read to

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<sup>542</sup> Julie Campbell, 'About Me', in *Julie Campbell Doll Artist* <[www.juliecampbelldollartist.com](http://www.juliecampbelldollartist.com)> [accessed 17 March 2015]

life'.<sup>543</sup> For Campbell then, while obviously interested in selling and marketing her creations, her choice of character to feature is founded in an interest in books and reading.



**Figure 68: Two Miss Havisham Art Dolls, by Julie Campbell (2012).** Images©juliecambelldollartist.co.uk



**Figure 69: Pincushions: Tom Pinch, Mr Bumble, Captain Cuttle, Mr Pickwick, and Tony Weller, by Unknown (c1900).** Image© Charles Dickens Museum.

As we have seen with fan-created dolls and figurines, the choice of characters for representation can be aesthetic or useful or even both. One final example I would like to look at in this section is a small collection of pin cushions in the collection of the Charles Dickens Museum seen in Figure 69. These pin-cushions, are two-thirds

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<sup>543</sup> Campbell.

porcelain figurine interrupted by a fabric pincushion section, and are physical representations of the marriage of useful thing and aesthetic collectible.

Known as half-dolls, the porcelain torso and legs of these pincushions were common from the end of the nineteenth century through to the 1920s and 1930s. Most often, however, these half-dolls were female figures and rarely representative of characters. Instead, half-dolls were usually anonymous female forms. Half-dolls could be made into many different things, some useful and some decorative, such as dressing table brushes, powder puffs, decorative hoop-skirted dolls, and of course pincushions of varying shapes and sizes. Of the earlier half-dolls, the more common design was an eighteenth-century lady with a high wig. Later, in the twentieth century, female 'bathing beauties' or fashionable flappers with bobbed hair became popular.

In my searching, I have found very few half-dolls of male characters and of those few male characters, most were representative of Pierrot the clown. Thus, the fact that these pincushions are not only of characters from books rather than anonymous figures, but also that these pincushions are of *male* characters is doubly intriguing. Whereas in a female figurine, a fabric pincushion section might easily be disguised as a large bustled skirt, the bulging pincushion section on these male figurines is at odds with not only the character but also with the fashion of the times; were the characters dressed in ballooning pantaloons from the seventeenth century, the shape might be less anomalous. Especially in the figure of Tom Pinch, himself not represented in things as often as some of the other pincushion characters such as Pickwick or Captain Cuttle, the characteristic thin and meek frame of the character is greatly at odds with the bulging fabric section that represent his hips.

Since I wrote a small blurb in the Museum friend's newsletter about the pincushions, the CDM has purchased a Marchioness pincushion and I have found

images of a Sairey Gamp pincushion online. This means that when the pincushions were produced, they were not exclusively male characters as the selection in the museum might suggest. Perhaps if these and other similar collectibles were displayed more by museums or talked about, more might be known about why these characters were chosen and what these choices mean for how Dickens continues to be read by both the public and the academe.

### **5.3. The Curious Case of Dolly Varden**

Little Nell dolls represented an ideal of pure, self-sacrificing girlhood and even Mrs Gamp (without her negative attributes as the doll manufactures made her) could represent the traditional female roles of Nursing and Midwifery. However, neither is as problematic as the relationship between Dolly Varden and womanhood. Dolly presents an interesting conundrum in the world of Dickensian memorabilia as, unlike the iconic characters of Pickwick and Miss Havisham, Dolly has emerged from the background of one of the lesser known and least adapted of Dickens's novels and has in fact superseded the context of her story. Despite Dolly's problematic expressive sexuality in the novel, her appropriation into a wide array of traditional feminine commodities reinforces an image of Dolly as the 'picture perfect' female.

In the novel *BR*, Dolly Varden's character is often reduced to no more than her clothes or colouring. The anthropomorphising of her clothing enforces a personality onto her body. Dolly's body is then used to define her and subsume her character. Despite her words or emotions, the male gaze directed onto her body designs her existence as a statically beautiful woman. It is this image that is then taken and reused in popular culture. Dolly's persistence in cultural memory despite the loss of

her Dickensian origins, is precisely because she is reduced to an anonymous and personality-less dress.

As Dolly Varden became more and more entwined in cultural memory her existence in the Dickensian universe faded. Her 'afterlife' began to erode her Dickensian origins to the point where her character in *BR* became the afterlife or the secondary existence and her image and name (those aspects appropriated by culture) became the primary memory. Dolly's consequent mimesis as 'pretty woman' works to reinforce her persistence in feminine products and the loss of her Dickensian-ness. This transition of course ultimately asks questions of where character is founded; is it in its original form or in its cultural appropriation? Like the loss of her agency within the male gaze, Dolly's existence in cultural memory is through her clothing and image, not her personality. It is likewise Dolly's translation onto visual objects that reflects the arresting power of the male gaze; 'her visual presence tends to work against the development of a story-line, to freeze the flow of action in moments of erotic contemplation'.<sup>544</sup>

I will first look at Dolly's initial fascination outside of the novel; this was nearly solely confined to the art world. In *BR*, the first mention of Dolly is before her first appearance in person. She is discussed by two men as an object:

'She looks pretty enough to be well, and good too.'  
'She's always both, sir'.<sup>545</sup>

This dialogue between Joe Willet and Dolly's father, Gabriel Varden, happens quite early in the story, in the third chapter, and gives the reader the first impression of Dolly before she even appears herself. However, this impression is limited to her

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<sup>544</sup> Mulvey, pp.19-20.

<sup>545</sup> *BR*, p.69.

looks. Any other aspect of her character, like her health or morality, is also reduced to her ‘pretty-ness’.

Dolly appears in the next chapter. When her father Gabriel comes home, the reader is introduced to Dolly thus:

and a roguish face met his; a face lighted up by the loveliest pair of sparkling eyes that ever locksmith looked upon; the face of a pretty, laughing, girl; dimpled and fresh, and healthful—the very impersonation of good-humour and blooming beauty.<sup>546</sup>

Every time Dolly appears in the novel, her pretty looks and blushing cheeks are referenced. This continuing reference creates the meme of ‘Dolly= pretty, blushing’. Whether it was the vivid and colourful description of her clothes or the repeated descriptions of her beauty and desirability, Dolly became a favourite with male artists of the time. For example, uncharacteristic of his later more famous paintings, Dante Gabriel Rossetti drew a Dolly Varden quite similar to the original illustration. However, it was W.P. Frith’s fascination with Dolly which ultimately may have begun her rise into popular culture.

Frith was so struck with Dolly that, in his lifetime, he painted her at least five times. Dickens wrote to Frith in 1842, ‘I shall be very glad if you will do me the favour to paint me two little companion pictures; one, a Dolly Varden (whom you have so exquisitely done already), the other a Kate Nickleby. [...] P.S. I take it for granted that the original picture of Dolly with the Bracelet, is sold?’<sup>547</sup> Dickens was so taken with Frith’s first painting of Dolly that he commissioned one for himself as well as asking Frith to paint another of his heroines. While Dickens had many images of his characters given to him by artists throughout his career, Dickens’s letter to Frith is one of the few cases of Dickens actively commissioning a painting of his characters.

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<sup>546</sup> BR, p.78.

<sup>547</sup> *Letters*, Vol. 3, p.373.

Dickens later wrote to Frith in 1848 and again referenced his Dolly in his kind remembrance to the artist, ‘Think of your dear sister, Dolly, and how altered her appearance and character are, without you. She is not the same girl. Think, too, of the author of your being, and what he must feel when he sees your place empty, every day!’<sup>548</sup> Rather than being a one off piece, Dickens continued to associate Frith with Dolly, even calling her Frith’s sister. Considering Dickens often referred to his characters and novels as ‘children’ this association is dear indeed.

The painting which captured the heart of Dickens so much that he had to have a copy is seen in Figure 70. It is perhaps the most well-known of Frith’s Dolly portraits. Oddly, given the fame of this Dolly painting, the Kate Nickleby commission which accompanied it is now missing; it is most likely held in private hands and has never come up for public auction since its original sale. But the now iconic Dolly painting, which hung in Gad’s Hill and was only parted from Dickens in the estate sale after his death, was not the only time Frith painted Dolly.

A very similar painting (Figure 71) is held at the Tate Britain in London. This painting has been given a date 1842-9, which supposes it was most likely based on the Dickens commission. Perhaps Frith was so pleased with Dickens’s approval of Dolly, Frith decided to paint her again in a similar attitude. However, this assumption is thrown into doubt on further examination of Frith’s other Dolly Vardens. Another painting survives in the Wolverhampton Museum and Art Gallery archives (WAVE) by Frith, painted in 1842 as well. This oil painting (Figure 72) shows a very different image of Dolly Varden.

The first two paintings are very similar; they portray Dolly in the countryside, alone. They are, as well, almost directly related to the descriptive passage of Dolly in *Barnaby Rudge*, a passage that both the V&A and Tate chose to quote to some degree

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<sup>548</sup> *Letters*, Vol.5 p.423.



in the description of the paintings on their respective collections websites; ‘The very pink and pattern of good looks, in a smart little cherry mantle... a little straw hat... And she wore such a cruel little muff, and such a heart-rending pair of shoes.’<sup>549</sup>

Dolly’s soon to be memetic floral patterned dress and bustle are also both major features in the first two Frith paintings. However, this third painting, painted around the same time as the other two, portrays Dolly Varden quite differently. In this more impressionist painting, Dolly is sitting next to a lover and is in an elaborately panelled room. While she does still wear a hat, the ribbon lies untied, flowing down her back instead of tied up under her chin and the design atop the crown is far more elaborate than a simple straw country hat. In fact, due to the impressionist nature of the painting, it is unclear whether Dolly’s hat is even her characteristic straw hat at all. Her deep ‘cherry coloured mantle’ is muted to a more elegant pink silk and the patterned fabric of her dress, which was later named ‘Dolly Varden Chintz’, is replaced by a plain white silk. In fact, apart from her coquettish look, there is little to nothing present which distinguishes the female figure in the third painting as the character of Dolly Varden. Furthermore, the scene illustrated by this painting is not associated with an illustration in the novel. Whereas the first two paintings harken back to the image of Dolly in the woods in the novel, as does the next paintings, it is only on familiarity with the story that we could assume a setting for this painting. The lover in the painting might be the oft mentioned rival to Joe Willet, the coachmaker, who is never introduced directly in the novel but is often referred to in Dolly’s thoughts. Therefore, what we have here is a painting only associated with Dolly Varden by its name and only recognisable within the plot to those with whom the story’s details are familiar.

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<sup>549</sup> BR, p.207.



**Figure 70: *Dolly Varden*, by William Powell Frith (1842).**  
Image© V&A.



**Figure 71: *Dolly Varden*, by William Powell Frith (c.1842-1849).**  
Image© Tate Gallery





**Figure 72: *Dolly Varden*, by William Powell Frith (c.1842).**  
Image© Wolverhampton Arts and Museum Services.



**Figure 73: *Hugh and Dolly Varden*, by William Powell Frith (c.1863).**  
Image© Lancashire County Museum Services.



**Figure 74: *Hugh and Dolly*, by Phiz (1842).**  
Image© Charles Dickens Museum.

But this was not Frith's last foray into the world of Dolly Varden. In 1863, Frith once again painted Dolly Varden (Figure 73). Since the last three paintings, Frith had also painted a now famous portrait of Dickens himself. In this later painting of Dolly, Frith has replaced Dolly back into the countryside and into the familiar settings of the novel's illustration but has chosen to keep her silken muted-coloured dress (albeit fashioning her hat into a more straw-like form). The result of these decisions is that Dolly's elegant clothes contrast sharply with the nature surrounding her; the deep colours of the dark wood mean that Dolly herself appears almost ghost-like. Her back turned to the viewer, we are only just able to catch a glimpse of Dolly's face as she turns toward Hugh. While we cannot see her full expression, there is a distinct feeling of distrust or fear coming from Dolly instead of the flirtatious smile present in the other paintings. Instead, it is Hugh, much more suited to his surroundings in torn and dirty clothes, who appears to be smiling. In Figure 73, Frith has chosen to represent, not the flirtatious Dolly of his original design, but instead the scene just after it in the novel, in which Dolly is confronted by Hugh. Interestingly, in the original novel publication, there is not a single illustration of Dolly reminiscent of Frith's 1842 Dolly. However, there is an illustration in which Dolly is confronted by Hugh; this can be seen in Figure 74. Perhaps Frith chose this new scene in order to bring Dolly back into the original publication?

Compared to Figure 72, Figure 73 has entirely reversed the power relations between Dolly and her admirer. Dolly in Figure 73 displays almost none of the characteristics of previous Dolly Varden representations. In fact, by 1863 the character of Dolly Varden had begun to be incorporated into fashionable society. One might expect Frith to then represent Dolly in a much more 'recognizable' form than this demure society woman in the wood.

While the novel reduces Dolly to her powerless sexuality, the first three of Frith's paintings give the character some agency. Although she is still locked within the male gaze, Dolly is (in Figure 70 and Figure 71) confronting the viewer. While her body is angled away, the tilt of her face presents a downward gaze to the viewer, leaving Dolly on the higher ground. Dolly's arm positions and gestures in Figure 70, Figure 71, and Figure 72 also give the character agency. She is defiant and rejecting, while the male in Figure 72 is pleading, leaning into Dolly's retreating body.

However, by Figure 73, Frith has removed Dolly's entire active agency. It is as if, by returning Dolly to her novel scenery and the sexual assault scene, Frith is also returning Dolly to Dickens's passive physical female. Frith removes both Dolly's confronting gaze and physical rejection. The viewer instead mainly sees the character's back. The colours are washed out and traditionally feminine compared to the much stronger masculine blue of Hugh's jacket. It is instead Hugh who looks down at Dolly. Dolly has been returned to the passive beautiful femininity of a sexual object. Phiz's original illustration in Figure 74 shows the same scene but allows the two characters near equal height and positions. Dolly's back is presented to Hugh instead of to the viewer.

Frith was not the only one playing with Dolly's image. An article in *Dickensian* in 1977 reiterates the appropriation of Dolly's sexual femininity into fashion in 1871;

fashionable ladies were imitating the eighteenth-century milkmaid, supposedly combining pastoral innocence with the sauciness of the country wench. To achieve this image, they revived the costume of the 1770s and 1780s, the period in which *Barnaby Rudge* was set. Overskirts drawn up to reveal quilted petticoats, piled up hair and tiny hats came back into fashion, and, in particular, the polonaise, an overskirt looped up to form three large puffs over the hips. These were just the clothes worn by Dolly herself as depicted by her first illustrator Phiz, and in the painting by Frith. Thus, so perfectly did Dolly match the current ideal that a country-style chintz polonaise was introduced in 1871, and christened 'the Dolly Varden'.<sup>550</sup>

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<sup>550</sup> Vanda Foster, 'The Dolly Varden', *The Dickensian*, 73, 381 (1977), 18-24. pp. 20-21.

According to Vanda Foster, the fashion was set and corresponded with Dolly's image. Since the Frith painting had just been sold at the Gad's Hill auction after Dickens's death. However, the proposal that Dolly's name and image came into fashion in 1870 from the Gad's Hill auction, might not be entirely true. The V&A museum has in its collections, a wax-headed doll dressed in a 'Dolly Varden' costume dated at 1869 (Figure 75). While indeed, most instances I have found of the use of the name Dolly Varden attached to objects and fashions are from 1870 onwards, this instance of the Dolly Varden 'doll' being dated a year earlier, means not only could the association of Dolly with fashions have been in common use before the sale of Frith's painting, but it means that the use could also have been in existence while Dickens was still alive.



**Figure 75: Wax Doll dressed in 'Dolly Varden' fashion, by unknown (1869). Image© V&A**

This is because Dickens's own reduction of Dolly to visual object (the same reduction that spurred Frith to paint her) was present in the novel. The preference of the pastoral Dolly of Frith's earlier painting over the later paintings may be because

the 1842 painting was the one owned by Dickens himself; there was an inherent 'authentication' to the country Dolly in the woods image over the silken Dolly of 1863. Not only did the earlier Dolly correspond to the novel's illustrations but it was also commissioned and approved of by Dickens himself. Therefore, the popular image of Dolly that would come to be associated with fashion and continue on in cultural memory was initially that of the original novel and Dickens's own view of Dolly. Ironically then, while this image became synonymous with the name of Dolly Varden, her character within the novel and the novel's plot became less important.

Another article in the *Dickensian*, published shortly after Foster's article tries to trace the naming of the Dolly Varden Trout. In this short article, Richard Dunn claims, 'it was obviously the dress and not the character that directly inspired the common name for the fish.'<sup>551</sup> But if the character of Dolly in the novel is restricted to her physical attractiveness to the men around her, then the character is in essence her dress. However, while Dunn appears certain that the fashion was the initial beginning of the use of Dolly Varden's name, even he is confused between the pre-eminence of the Dolly Varden dress or the Dolly Varden hat.

Often shown together, and thus not always disassociated from one another, the Dolly Varden Dress and the Dolly Varden Hat were nevertheless distinctive fashion crazes. An article in the *New York Times* in July of 1872 claims the 'downfall of every other part of Miss Dolly Varden's costume' except the hat.<sup>552</sup> Indeed, this article describes the fashion as 'slandering' the name of Dolly Varden (the character) in preference to money and fashion. While it is arguable that the Dolly Varden dress was dying out, there does seem to be a more steady persistence of the Dolly Varden hat. While often pictured in combination to a Dolly Varden dress, it is the hat to

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<sup>551</sup> Richard J. Dunn, 'In Pursuit of the Dolly Varden', *The Dickensian*, 74, 384 (1978), 22-24. p.22.

<sup>552</sup> 'Long Branch- A Summer Evening at the Sea-side-Everyday Life-Miss Dolly Varden', *New York Times*, 14 Jul 1872, p. 3. ProQuest Historical Newspapers. [Accessed 12 December 2014].

which is more often referred- although often in satirical fashion in British periodicals. An image in *Fun* refers to different styles of Dolly Varden hats as fish, coal scuttles, biscuits, and more (see Figure 76). Likewise, a comic in *The London Serio-Comic Journal*, illustrated a young lady's Dolly Varden hat catching the wind and blowing the lady over a cliff (see Figure 77). *Punch* pokes fun at ladies wearing Dolly Varden hats as having to adopt a new kind of farewell kiss to accomodate the large curved brims (see Figure 78).



**Figure 76: 'Designs for Dolly Varden Hats', *Fun*, May 17th, 1873. p. 203. ProQuest Online. [accessed 05 December 2**





Figure 77: 'The Dangerous Dolly Varden Hat- A Fact', *Judy; or the London Serio-comic Journal*, 18 September, 1872. p.220. ProQuest Online. [accessed 05 December 2014]



Figure 78: 'The Dolly Varden Farewell Kiss', *Punch*, 14 October, 1871. Gale NewsVault. [accessed online 08 December 2014]



**Figure 79: 'A Spring Costume', *The Manchester Guardian*, 6 April, 1914. p.3. ProQuest Online. [accessed 08 December 2014]**

Despite journals and newspapers poking fun at the various Dolly Varden fashions, the name persisted both in England and across the Atlantic in America. An advert in *The Manchester Guardian* in 1871 advertises a Dolly Varden down quilt for sale.<sup>553</sup> Across the Atlantic, in 1876, the *New York Times* published an article on a Bankruptcy case against 'The Dolly Varden Store' which had opened in 1872 (most likely at the height of the initial craze). Foster's look at the fashion goes on to claim, 'Indeed the style continued to be recorded in the fashion magazines right into spring

<sup>553</sup> 'Advertisement', *The Manchester Guardian*, 2 December 1871, p. 1. ProQuest Historical Newspapers. [Accessed 12 December 2014].

of 1872, and was probably worn for some time after'.<sup>554</sup> In fact, the association of the name Dolly Varden with styles of dress persisted well into the twentieth century. The downfall of the store in New York along with the claim by the other *New York Times* article might suggest some truth in the idea that the fashion of dress was dying out; however, a society fashion page in the *New York Times* in 1908 notes 'In the wardrobe of a debutante of the coming summer there is a fetching little Dolly Varden hat, having a crown of dotted blue tulle shirred into a mob-shaped crown over a brim of yellow horse-hair [...].'<sup>555</sup> Various further articles in the *New York Times* reference Dolly Varden fashions, 'It was necessary that the Dolly Varden skirts should come in with the sprigged and figured silks'<sup>556</sup> and 'Flowered silks are again in fashion- These are especially good made in the Dolly Varden style- Black and white chantilly Drapery on satin and chiffon gowns,'<sup>557</sup> and 'The extreme [skirts] have voluminous panniers, which, in conjunction with a narrow floor length skirt beneath, bear a startling resemblance to our picturesque old and dear friend, Dolly Varden'<sup>558</sup> all appearing in fashion pages in 1912.

The 'new' Dolly Varden fashions, using nostalgic chintzes and adjusting the bustle into the pannier, were not only an American trend. Dolly Varden reappears in a large illustration of ladies' fashion in *The Manchester Guardian* in 1914. Interestingly, this image places the lady wearing the chintz peplum (reminiscent of Dolly's mantle) and the new Dolly Varden hat in a pastoral setting, perhaps additionally harkening back to the 'original' Dolly?<sup>559</sup> (Figure 79). Even *The Times of*

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<sup>554</sup> Foster, p.23.

<sup>555</sup> Marie Weldon, 'Potpourri of Fashion- Notable Costumes at Recent Weddings', *New York Times*, 3 May 1908, p. 6. ProQuest Historical Newspapers. [Accessed 8 December 2014].

<sup>556</sup> Anne Rittenhouse, 'Latest Pictorial Fashions from Paris', *New York Times*, 3 March 1912, p. 14.

<sup>557</sup> Anne Rittenhouse, 'What the Well-Dressed Woman is Wearing', *New York Times*, 14 July 1912, p. 8.

<sup>558</sup> Anne Rittenhouse, 'What the Well-Dressed Woman is Wearing', *New York Times*, 25 February 1912, p. 12.

<sup>559</sup> 'A Spring Costume', *The Manchester Guardian*, 6 April 1914, p. 3.

*India* notes the expectation of the Dolly Varden hat to be fashionable in the coming summers.<sup>560</sup>

Dolly Varden fashions continued further. In 1925, fashion columnist Elita Miller Lenz noted 'Madam Kaphan was putting the finishing touches on the charming frock illustrated, which is her own original design. She calls it the Dolly Varden frock. [She] designates the Dolly Varden frock as girlish and unsophisticated.'<sup>561</sup> This new design (Figure 80) is unlike the previous Dolly Vardens; judging from what the designer has claimed, this new dress may have been inspired by the Dolly of the novel, since it highlights 'girlish and unsophisticated', as a feature unlike the fashions which had borrowed her name until then. Another dress of four years later, while claiming to be inspired by the 1870s and early twentieth-century fashions of the same name, 'The smartest frocks today provoke pictures of "yesterday"' listing the 'Dolly Varden Dance Frock of Flowered Cotton Net', the advertisement also hints at the character of Dolly saying, 'these charming little frocks make you think of a garden in old Charleston- a moon, a girl, and a soldier lad. And though it is sixty five years after, now, the effect on any lad will be the same!'<sup>562</sup> The date harkens back to the 1860s, implying that Dolly Varden fashions were in vogue before 1870; but more importantly, the reference to the garden and soldier could be referring to the classic image of Dolly and Joe Willet (who becomes a soldier in the novel) as well as the coquettishness of Dolly herself.

These fashion advertisements from the 1920s highlight the few aspects of Dolly's character that persisted in addition to her appearance. Dolly is 'girlish and unsophisticated' and 'charming' and exists in relation to men. The flowered chintz of

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<sup>560</sup> 'Millinery', *The Times of India*, 15 June 1914, p. 9.

<sup>561</sup> Elita Miller Lenz, 'Feminine Frills', *The Billboard*, 23 May 1925, p. 42. ProQuest Historical Newspapers. [Accessed 24 October 2014].

<sup>562</sup> 'Advertisement- Best & Co.', *New York Times*, 19th December 1929, p. 5.

the 1929 pattern is repeated throughout the fashions bearing Dolly's name and was inspired initially from Dolly's floral dress. The Dolly Varden chintz became a design of fabric itself independent from the fashion from which it got its popularity. In addition to the blankets and quilts, Figure 81 illustrates a foundation garment from 1935 in the Dolly Varden chintz pattern. By this time however, Dickens was enjoying a resurgence in popularity with the opening of the Dickens Museum in 1925 and the centenary celebration around *Pickwick* in 1935-36 so that an article in *The Observer* in 1936, while talking about the still popular Dolly Varden hat, actually references *BR*.<sup>563</sup>

Arguably by this time, the name Dolly Varden was a regular occurrence in popular fashion, and the new idea, when talking about fashion, was to attempt to trace the name's origins rather than revisiting previous styles of the fashion or fabric. An advertisement for Saks at 34<sup>th</sup> Street seen in Figure 82, is attempting to capitalise on the rise in Dickensian interest with a series of Dickens-inspired hats, the David Copperfield, the Little Nell, and the Little Dorrit. Interestingly, Saks does not list the Dolly Varden hat. Might this be because the style had so separated itself from its Dickensian roots that readers and shoppers might not recognise the association?

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<sup>563</sup> H. Pearl Adam, 'Woman and Her World', *The Observer*, 19 January 1936, p. 23.



Figure 80: 'Feminine Frills: The Dolly Varden Frock and the Smile dress,' *The Billboard*, 23 May, 1925. p.42. ProQuest Online [accessed 24 October 2014]

**Formfit's  
New Dolly Varden  
Foundations . . .  
with "Thrill Plus Bra"  
7.98**

We are the first to present this new Spring foundation by Formfit. Fashioned of fine latex and satin, it is light in weight with low back . . . holds the figure firmly . . . uplifts the bust, indents the waist, and flattens the hips. Here is a foundation that any figure from the slight young thing to the not so slight and not so young will wear.

Arnold Constable,  
Cosette, Fourth Floor



Figure 81: 'New Dolly Varden Foundations', *New York Times*, 20 Jan, 1935. P.15. ProQuest Online [accessed 24 October 2014].

**THE NEW  
SAKS 34<sup>TH</sup>**  
BROADWAY AT 34<sup>TH</sup> STREET

Presents  
**A Tale of Two Eras**

Just a hundred years ago, Charles Dickens set down the last word of his immortal *Pickwick Papers*. Though he probably never thought to cast a millinery vogue, now, a century later, hats that young Copperfield might have worn are galvanizing Paris. The New Saks 34th is first not only to recognize their resemblance to fashions of the Dickens era . . . but to sense their current importance in this time of tailored suits. Tomorrow we launch an exclusive collection of Dickens-derived hats named for the characters that inspired them . . . a bibliography of some of the best loved personalities in the world of fiction.

THE NEW SAKS 34TH FOURTH FLOOR

**DAVID COPPERFIELD**  
(left) in felt . . . 12.75  
in straw . . . 15.00

**"LITTLE NELL"** (top) in felt . . . 12.75  
in straw . . . 16.75

**"LITTLE DORRIT"** (right) in belting ribbon with straw . . . 16.75

Black, brown and navy.  
Choose colors to order.

 A black and white advertisement for Saks 34th Street. The top section features the store's name and address. Below is a paragraph of text about the collection. The bottom section shows three hats: a top hat (David Copperfield), a small hat (Little Nell), and a hat with a ribbon (Little Dorrit). A price list is provided for each hat.

Figure 82: Advertisement for Saks 34th Street from *The New York Times*, 12 January, 1936. p.17. ProQuest Online [accessed 24 October 2014]

Unlike the Dickensian things inspired by Dickens's other characters, (e.g. Pickwick pen nibs, pipe tampers, and fire irons) Dolly Varden appropriations are nearly exclusively feminine products. From fashion to dolls to cookery (even a Diamond Mine), Dolly is persistently associated with images of traditional femininity.

We have already seen some Dickens dolls from notable doll-makers of the early twentieth century representing certain characters but, like the Dolly Varden chintz pattern, a certain kind of doll came to be synonymous with Dolly to the point of becoming a common noun itself. Whereas Martha Chase, Madame Alexander, and Peggy Nisbet as notable brands released dolls which have now become collectibles, the Dolly Varden Rag Doll is difficult to trace to any one manufacturer or designer and indeed, does not seem to be thought of as significant enough to be in museum collections. This doll style is to be distinguished from the wax doll in the V&A. The rag doll bearing Dolly's name is almost impossible to find, possibly due to its simple design and purpose for play rather than collection. The instances I have been able to find have been on web-auction sites. While considered valuable in monetary worth- probably due to their rarity- I have not found any of these dolls in museum collections. The most common style of rag doll is seen in Figure 83 and Figure 84, each of which were found sold for nearly \$2,000 on web auction sites.

In these images, we see what has been considered the most important and noticeable feature of Dolly Varden, her chintz pattern. The idea of these dolls being 'rag' dolls might mean that they could have been made at home and not by a single manufacturer at all (although they are remarkably similar to each other).

Interestingly the rag dolls do not have the straw hat of the original Dolly and instead have bonnets made out of the same rags of their bodies. The face of Figure 84 even displays something of Dolly's characteristic coquettish smile and the painted face of

each has the delicate sheen of Dolly's pink cheeks. While these dolls are not dated, they are estimated at late nineteenth, early twentieth century production because of the existence of certain Lulu Glaser memorabilia. While the Dolly fashions, hats, and chintzes illustrate various levels of removal from an idea of 'original', the Dolly Varden/Lulu Glaser relationship is indicative of yet another level of removal- illustrative of the absorption of Dolly into popular culture and thus, cultural memory.

While adaptations of *BR* had been done on stage since the publication of the novel, it was not until 1872 that productions began arising titled and adapted from Dolly Varden herself. This date is interestingly consistent with the sale of Frith's Dolly and the emergence of the fashions of 1870 and 1871. It was not until 1903 however, that one of these plays found popularity in both England and America. Written by Julian Edwards and Stanislaus Strange, *Dolly Varden the Musical Comedy in Two Acts* started prominent actress of the time Lulu Glaser.<sup>564</sup> Interestingly, while it is this production in its numerous performances which found immortality in the pages of newspaper reviews, early twentieth-century theatre studies, and memorabilia of Lulu Glaser herself (innumerable collectible postcards exist for her depiction of Dolly), it is only on closer inspection of the play itself than one discovers the connection to Dolly Varden is in name and image only and the plot of the play is taken instead from the restoration play, *The Country Wife*, by William Wycherley.

Nevertheless, Lulu Glaser's fame and popularity perpetuated the name and image of Dolly Varden. A collectible Dolly Varden Rag Doll of 1909 was sold online for \$550 in online auction (Figure 86). This doll was particularly sold as memorabilia

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<sup>564</sup> The Lulu Glaser Archive is held at Princeton University's Library Special Collections and includes some of her Dolly Varden costumes and other memorabilia.



for Lulu Glaser as Dolly Varden. Another such example of memorabilia is the Lulu Glaser 100<sup>th</sup> Performance Collectible Perfume seen in Figure 87.

The rag doll on the left is similar to the previous rag dolls and we can connect this collectible (although not labelled as such on the auction site) to the collectible perfume on the right which came with a miniature programme for Lulu Glaser's 100<sup>th</sup> performance. The perfume is dated 1910 and so we can assume the rag doll on the left is from a similar date. The doll's similarity to the previous rag dolls suggests that either all of the rag dolls were associated with Lulu Glaser's Dolly or that the rag doll released with the Glaser collectible was a re-envisioning of the older dolls. Whether one is illustrative of the other or vice versa, these objects nevertheless perpetuated the image of Dolly Varden which has become immersed in popular culture. I wonder if the perfume was reminiscent of the floral accents of the chintzes.



**Figure 83: Dolly Varden Rag Doll, value \$1,800, by unknown (c.1900). Image© Theriaults**



**Figure 84: Dolly Varden Rag Doll, value \$495, by unknown (c.1906). Image© Ruby Lane.**



**Figure 85: Larger doll holding a small Dolly Varden Rag Doll, value \$800, by Unknown (c.1890). Image© Theriaults**



**Figure 86: Small Dolly Varden Rag Doll with Lulu Glaser Sedan Chair, value \$550, by Unknown (c.1902). Image© Theriaults**



**Figure 87: Lulu Glaser Sedan Chair (c.1902) and Lulu Glaser Perfume: Bouquet de la Foscarina (c.1910), value \$300. Image© liveauctioneers.com.**



While some rag dolls may have been released as Lulu Glaser memorabilia, the look of the rag dolls is still quite different from Lulu Glaser herself as Dolly Varden. Since some rag dolls were released as early as 1881, and the Glaser performance became popular around 1902, there was a steady twenty years of the rag doll gaining its own foothold in popular culture. Thus, by the popularity of the Glaser performance, the rag doll was brought in to celebrate the play but retained its ragged chintz clothes and soft bonnet. Lulu in her costume can be seen in Figure 88. Compared to the rag doll, it seems that in the case of Dolly Varden unlike the *Oliver!* dolls, the doll was brought in to boost the play rather than to represent the actor and costumes themselves. The character of Dolly Varden then is even more lost within the appropriation of her image in dolls and in theatre yet her name remained.

Dolly Varden also appeared around 1875 as a series of Paper Dolls. While again these could have been simply representations of the late nineteenth-century fashions, they have nevertheless remained as concrete archival examples of the popularity of the Dolly Varden image. These, unlike the dolls, are found in some museums. The Strong Museum of Play in Rochester, New York holds a number of these packs of paper dolls, seen in Figure 89. While named 'Dolly Varden Dolls' these paper dolls were all given other female names as well.



**Figure 88:** Lulu Glaser as Dolly Varden. Image© Flixr.



**Figure 89:** Little Dolly Varden Paper Dolls, pub. McLoughlin Bros. (c.1875-1876). Image© The Strong National Museum of Play.

Whether dolls, fashion, accessories, or memorabilia, it seems most representations of Dolly Varden in objects were in some form representative of her fashion. From the colourful speckled trout to the fashions, Dolly Varden's name is synonymous with the brightly coloured floral patterns, rosy cheeks, and coquettish smile of the heroine. However, through all of these examples, it seems that Dolly's representations have died out with the re-emergence of Dickensian studies themselves. Within the popular veneration of Dickens's novels between his death and the 1930s, Dickensian things were collectible, popular, and useful. However, as his prominence in literary studies and academic pursuits gained momentum from the 1930s, it seems as if the collectibles became less popular and rarer. Or at least this seems to be the case on the surface.

What I would like to propose instead, is that though Dolly herself is no longer a prominently recognised character, there are remainders of Dolly's appropriation left in culture which hint at her initial fascination. We have already seen how some Dickens characters have come in and out of vogue from Sam Weller's saturation in early Victorian culture to Scrooge and Miss Havisham's neo-Victorian fascination. However, it is Dolly who has stayed, at least in name, from Dickens's own time into our own modern era. There are many things which were initially fashioned on Dolly which are still recognisable to many people but these things are often not recognised as having a Dickens influence. Dolly has, in essence, superseded Dickensiana in one of the most common ways you could think of- through cake.

Known by many as the 'Princess Cake', the conical shaped doll cake is otherwise known as the Dolly Varden cake. The original Dolly Varden cake found in Victorian cookbooks was a spiced sponge cake, spotted with cherries and dried fruit and layered with plain sponge so as to imitate the floral pattern of the Dolly Varden chintz. A modern recreation of this cake is seen in Figure 90. An article by C. Cedro

in *The Australasian Journal of Popular Culture*, looks at tracing the historiography of the modern Dolly Varden cake which uses the conical tin and doll pick as in Figure 91.<sup>565</sup> Cedro finds a reference in a household book of 1881 published in America by Emma Whitcomb Babcock.<sup>566</sup> In this version, the initial cake mixture is split in two with one layer being flavoured with lemon and the other flavoured with cinnamon, nutmeg, and molasses. The two layers are then sandwiched with jelly.<sup>567</sup> Another version of the cake was published in 1882 in *Mrs Owens' Cook Book, and Useful Hints for the Household* which adds a frosting of egg whites and sugar to the outside of the cake.<sup>568</sup> Another 1916 household book, while not having a specific Dolly Varden cake recipe, has a full page advertisement for Dolly Varden Flour from Louisville, Kentucky within the pages of the cake recipe chapter.<sup>569</sup> Cedro traces similar cakes with either two or three layers of alternating spice and lemon cakes through to the 1930s; the popularity of the cake is consistent with Dolly Varden fashions.

The conical cake tin of Figure 91 was manufactured in the 1970s, says Cedro. He posits that the popularity of the conical doll cake was consistent with the popularity of the Barbie dolls of the 70s. If this is true, why was the new Dolly Varden cake not called the Barbie cake? With the new cake tin, the emphasis of the cake was shifted from the look of any layers or ingredients of the cake to the outside and the decoration. As Cedro comments on the new Dolly Varden cake recipes, 'Today, the Dolly Varden cake is more about the decoration than the cake [...] more emphasis is

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<sup>565</sup> C.Cedro, 'Dolly Varden: Sweet Inspiration', *Australasian Journal of Popular Culture*, 2:1 (2013), 37-46.

<sup>566</sup> Cedro, p. 40.

<sup>567</sup> Emma Whitcomb Babcock, *Household Hints*, online edition at archive.org edn (New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1881). p.54.

<sup>568</sup> Mrs Frances E. Owens, *Mrs Owens' Cook Book, and Useful Hints for the Household*, online archive.org edn (Chicago: Household Publishing Society, 1882). p.189.

<sup>569</sup> Mattie Lee Wehrley, *Handy Household Hints and Recipes*, online archive.org edn (Louisville: Breckel Press, 1916).p.196.

placed on the elaborate decoration of her 'dress' than the cake that supports this ornamentation'.<sup>570</sup> In a section on literary-inspired cakes from *Cake: A Global History*, Nicole Humble mentions the Dolly Varden cake as being an interesting literary cake because of its not being inspired by a cake but a character. Humble notes of the modern cake's shape and decoration, 'it is entertaining to see the process by which a cake named after a fictional character's style of dress eventually becomes a cake in the form of a dress'.<sup>571</sup>

Dolly Varden began her existence in the novel as defined by her clothing, the colours on her body, and male desire. Her persistence in cultural memory continually reiterates some, if not all, of these characteristics. Ultimately, by becoming a cake, Dolly is literally as well as figuratively consumed. As Mulvey says:

The image of woman as spectacle and fetish sets in motion another chain of metonymies, linking together various sites in which femininity is produced in advanced capitalist society: woman as consumed and woman as consumer of commodities, women exchanged in image and women transforming themselves into image through commodity consumption.<sup>572</sup>

While the image of Dolly remains in use although her Dickensian associations may be lost, twenty-first-century culture has replaced the consumed female with another Dickens female, Miss Havisham. Literally consumed by fire in the novel, Miss Havisham, like Dolly, is reduced to her clothing and relation to men. In *GE*, Miss Havisham is narrated through Pip's male gaze.

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<sup>570</sup> Cedro, p.42.

<sup>571</sup> Nicola Humble, *Cake, A Global History: The Edible Series* (London: Reaktion Books Ltd, 2010). p.51.

<sup>572</sup> Mulvey, xxxii.





**Figure 90: Modern 'Dolly Varden Cake' Recipe, adapted by Alexa Johnston.**  
Image©<http://ladiesaplate.co.nz/recipes/larger-cakes/dolly-var-den-cake.html>



**Figure 91: Dolly Varden Cake 'kit', (2014).** Image© EBay.

## 5.4. Conclusion

In 1856, Dickens wrote to George Hogarth: 'I have only time to empower you, in so many words, to convey to Addison and Co. my full permission to use the title "Little Dorrit" for the song you describe. Mary must add it to her Repertoire'.<sup>573</sup> This was one of many instances of Dickens giving permission for music composers, publishers, and printers to use titles, characters, illustrations, or incidents from his novels for songs and sheet music. What is interesting in this case is that Dickens mentions his own daughter collecting and playing such music.<sup>574</sup> A year before, Dickens wrote to the composer George Linley, who composed many songs based on Dickens's works. Again, Dickens mentions one of his daughters playing the song Linley has written for Little Nell but in this case, Dickens himself has written words to match Linley's music. Dickens writes:

It will give me great pleasure-and Mrs. Dickens no less- if you have leisure and inclination to come and see the little Theatricals of which I enclose you a bill. I have introduced your name into it, because the words of the song are designed for the Music you wrote to 'Little Nell'. One of my young daughters sings it very prettily, and it is a great favorite with all the house- I mean your air; not my words, which belong to the occasion.<sup>575</sup>

Dickens often publically criticised and in some cases brought suits against plagiarists of his works, but in the case of music, Dickens seems to be surprisingly lenient, as in the above instance, or writing additional words to match a song adapted from his original character.

In these two letters, we see instances of Dickens not only acknowledging but also interacting with the appropriation of his characters into saleable commodities. Not only is the music product for sale, the entertainment created by the playing

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<sup>573</sup> *Letters*, Supplement. 9, p.154.

<sup>574</sup> The Dickens family sheet music album can be found in the New York Public Library special collections.

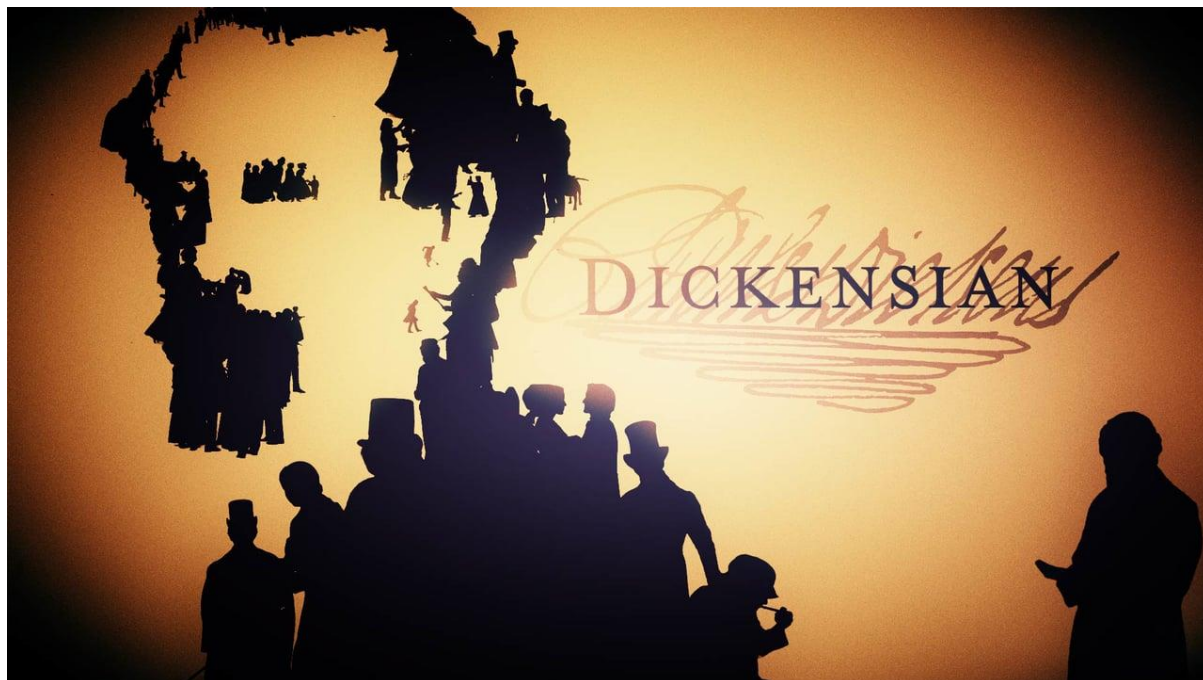
<sup>575</sup> *Letters*, Vol.7. p.637.

either privately or publically of music based on Dickens's works is a direct marriage of the portability of memorabilia and the spiritual enjoyment of art. In this chapter, I have looked at different ways in which Dickens's characters have been similarly adapted into things but retain meaning beyond the monetary value they are given. Through the mediation and adaptation of Dickens's characters into things, Dickens's characters become physically external to their novels in addition to being independent as seen in the previous chapter. Michel DeCerteau writes in *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 'We must first analyse its [the circulation of a representation] manipulation by users who are not its makers. Only then can we gauge the difference or similarity between the production of the image and the secondary production hidden in the process of its utilization'.<sup>576</sup> This secondary production is the production of the affect when a user interacts with an appropriation of a character. By looking at dolls, figurines, fashions, and even cake created by users, we can understand why literature passes into popular culture. Dickens's characters in things, whether they are appropriated into use-able things or aesthetic pieces, locate the moment when Dickens characters are not just read but gain their own agency.

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<sup>576</sup> Michel DeCerteau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, ed. by Steven Rendall (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988). p.xiii.

## 6. Conclusion: ‘Rebooting’ the Dickens Franchise with BBC’s *Dickensian*



**Figure 92:** *Dickensian* publicity image (2015-2016). Image ©BBC

On Boxing Day 2015, the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) premiered a new show called *Dickensian*. Created by *EastEnders* writer Tony Jordan, the show was advertised as ‘a world where some of Charles Dickens’ most iconic characters co-exist’.<sup>577</sup> The show ran for twenty episodes and was regrettably not renewed for further series. The creation and reviews of *Dickensian*, both professional and on social media, illustrate the current debate about how we should read Dickens.

Throughout this thesis, I have been arguing for a reading of Dickens centred in his characters and that these same characters can and do exist in cultural memory outside of their original appearances within their plots and novels. *Dickensian* is a concrete example of this kind of use of Dickens and his characters in our current popular culture. The publicity image for the show, seen above in

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<sup>577</sup> BBC One, Premier, and Red Planet Pictures, *Dickensian Press Pack*, 2015. p.3.

Figure 92, ‘replicates the creative process of *Dickensian* for the audience’,<sup>578</sup> that of a memory of Dickens and his works created by and mediated through Dickens’s characters.

Tony Jordan himself describes his inspiration for this show, ‘My love of Dickens came not from the novels [...] but from a love of character’.<sup>579</sup> When creating the plot lines for the characters which would appear in the show, Jordan recalled, ‘The gift of Dickens as a writer was not the stuff that was in the novels but what was not’.<sup>580</sup> The ‘freedom’, as Jordan described it, of being able to change the fate of characters, explore the experiences which created the character in the novel, or have characters from different novels interact with one another was the same freedom which led reviewers to call the show the ‘riskiest show on primetime’<sup>581</sup> and ‘a dirty secret’ of the BBC.<sup>582</sup>

When the Charles Dickens page on Facebook posted the online article from RadioTimes.com, announcing the cancellation of the series, user comments were both vehemently disappointed and glad. For every comment exclaiming ‘NNNNOOOOO!’<sup>583</sup> or decrying the ‘shame’<sup>584</sup> of the BBC in axing a show with

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<sup>578</sup> Holly Furneaux, ‘Dickensian, Dickens fantasy, and hope’, in *Journal of Victorian Culture Online* <<http://blogs.tandf.co.uk/jvc/2016/01/26/holly-furneaux-dickensian-dickens-fantasy-and-hope/>> [accessed 26 January 2016]

<sup>579</sup> Tony Jordan, ‘Tony Jordan, Dickensian’ Royal Holloway Centre for Victorian Studies and London Screenwriting Seminar. Senate House Library, October 29, 2015.

<sup>580</sup> Jordan, ‘Tony Jordan, Dickensian’.

<sup>581</sup> Jonathan Wright, ‘Dickensian- the riskiest show on primetime TV?’, in *The Guardian Online* <[www.theguardian.com/tv-and-radio/tvandradioblog/2016/feb/12/dickensian-the-riskiest-show-on-primetime-tv](http://www.theguardian.com/tv-and-radio/tvandradioblog/2016/feb/12/dickensian-the-riskiest-show-on-primetime-tv)> [accessed 28 February 2016]

<sup>582</sup> Michael Hogan, ‘The Dickensian finale deserved so much more from the BBC-review’, in *The Telegraph Online* <[www.telegraph.co.uk/tv/2016/02/19/the-dickensian-finale-deserved-so-much-more-from-the-bbc](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/tv/2016/02/19/the-dickensian-finale-deserved-so-much-more-from-the-bbc)> [accessed 28 February 2016]

<sup>583</sup> Kay Voizey, Comment to ‘BBC axes Dickensian after one series’ [Facebook post], 23/04/2016 <https://www.facebook.com/CharlesDickensAuthor/?fref=ts> [Accessed 23/04/2016].

<sup>584</sup> Bernie Simmons wrote ‘Shame on you BBC you used to be worth watching...’. (Bernie Simmons, comment to ‘BBC axes Dickensian after one series’ [Facebook post], 23/04/2016 <https://www.facebook.com/CharlesDickensAuthor/?fref=ts> [Accessed 23/04/2016]).

‘potential’,<sup>585</sup> there were equally negative comments. While user Megan O’Malley posted ‘I LOVED this series!’<sup>586</sup> Jonathan Riley wrote ‘Good Riddance to bad rubbish. This programme is a travesty’.<sup>587</sup> The strong feelings evoked by *Dickensian* illustrate how the debate surrounding how Dickens and his works should be read and treated is ongoing. It seems that viewers either loved the style and content of *Dickensian* being ‘inspired by’ rather than ‘adapted from’ or they hated it. The very desire by Tony Jordan for the show’s characters to be ‘not imprisoned by the narrative’<sup>588</sup> has led others to claim that its failure was that certain minor plots ‘never seems to go anywhere’<sup>589</sup> and ‘*Dickensian* doesn’t know if it’s a murder mystery or a clever look at the characters’ backstories’.<sup>590</sup>



**Figure 93: Screen capture from *Dickensian*, Episode 6, (2015). Image© BBC.**

<sup>585</sup> David Shaw wrote ‘Sad to hear this - I thought it had a lot of potential’. (David Shaw, comment to ‘BBC axes Dickensian after one series’ [Facebook post], 23/04/2016 <https://www.facebook.com/CharlesDickensAuthor/?fref=ts> [Accessed 23/04/2016]).

<sup>586</sup> Megan O’Malley, comment to ‘BBC axes Dickensian after one series’ [Facebook post], 23/04/2016 <https://www.facebook.com/CharlesDickensAuthor/?fref=ts> [Accessed 23/04/2016]).

<sup>587</sup> Jonathan Riley, comment to ‘BBC axes Dickensian after one series’ [Facebook post], 23/04/2016 <https://www.facebook.com/CharlesDickensAuthor/?fref=ts> [Accessed 23/04/2016]).

<sup>588</sup> Jordan, ‘London Screenwriting Seminar’.

<sup>589</sup> Wright, ‘Dickensian-the riskiest show on primetime TV?’

<sup>590</sup> Rachel Holdsworth, ‘Dickensian is boring- and it's Charles Dickens's fault’, in *NewStatesman* <[www.newstatesman.com/print/node/300437](http://www.newstatesman.com/print/node/300437)> [accessed 22 March 2016]

While the idea of creating a television show out of an amalgamation of various Dickens characters taken from disparate novels might seem novel for some, and a ‘travesty’ for others, the idea itself is founded on practices of reading Dickens which have occurred since the author first published. As Ben Winyard notes, reading the serialised novel ‘encourage[s] the proliferation of imaginative spaces’ so readers and producers alike have been using these imaginative spaces to explore the afterlives of Dickens’s characters.<sup>591</sup>

That Tony Jordan created the series with inspiration from his days writing for television soap opera *EastEnders* is not a coincidence. Jennifer Hayward wrote of the connection between serial fiction and soap opera in 1997 in her book *Consuming Pleasures*.<sup>592</sup> While some of Hayward’s arguments are outdated, her connection of Dickens to the soap opera genre was perhaps, knowing the format and creator of *Dickensian*, providential.<sup>593</sup> In fact, the failure of the show to thrive may be attributed to the erratic scheduling given to it by the BBC, which refuses the primary aspect of the successful serial and the soap opera, that of its regular ‘ritual-like’ publishing and viewing. Hayward writes:

each day’s reading or viewing becomes the same experience: slotted into the same space in the day’s schedule, taking place in the same surroundings, involving the same characters. [...] In addition to enjoying the reassurance of the familiar, readers take pleasure in the rhythms of seriality.<sup>594</sup>

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<sup>591</sup> Furneaux, ‘Dickensian, Dickens Fantasy, and Hope’.

<sup>592</sup> Jennifer Hayward, *Consuming Pleasures: Active Audiences and Serial Fictions from Dickens to Soap Operas* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1997).

<sup>593</sup> An example of how Hayward’s argument may seem outdated is in her discussion of the ephemeral nature of the serial in all of its forms. Hayward writes, ‘Pushing the Dickensian serial narrative to its logical conclusion, both comic strips and soap operas were created to *vanish*. Each episode gives way to the next, repeatedly renewing an experience that eternally changes and eternally remains the same’ (Hayward, p.135.). Hayward states that the ‘fading’ memory of the viewer/reader happens because the soap opera is viewed but not recorded, the comic strip is read and discarded. While this is still true, the argument could now be extended to the repeated viewings of serial television shows through internet streaming services and the repeated viewing and sharing of comic strips through internet sites and social media. Even the ritualistic nature of the scheduling of serial forms can be subverted with live television recording devices like Tivo.

<sup>594</sup> Hayward, pp.135-136.

By denying *Dickensian* the regularity of serial viewings, the BBC was denying viewers the immersive ‘rhythms’ of the serial.

Tony Jordan has spoken widely of his wishes for *Dickensian* to be new and original but also a show in which fans of Dickens, Dickens scholars, or even Dickensian newcomers would find something to appreciate. He spoke in an interview for the official press release for the show, ‘You can watch it whether you have read every Dickens book and have a degree in Dickens, or you’ll enjoy it if you’ve never read a Dickens book in your entire life and your movie was the *Muppets Christmas Carol*’.<sup>595</sup> Regardless of the position of the viewer, *Dickensian* was meant to be referential rather than reverential and hoped to show how Dickens could still be a central focus of a show built entirely out of his characters; this is nowhere more pertinent than in the choice of name, ‘Dickensian’.<sup>596</sup>

The fact that *Dickensian* is a show created around character places it in a different position to previous adaptations of Dickens’s stories. Sheenagh Pugh writes of the importance of character in fanfiction:

You can set the story in a different timeline, cross it with other fictions, write before it began or after it ended or even make it go in a different direction. But in the end you must work with a particular set of people and whatever situation you put them in, they must behave and speak like themselves.<sup>597</sup>

In this sense, because *Dickensian* was based around characters, it could be considered fanfiction, especially with its claim of being ‘inspired by’ rather than ‘adapted from’. The irony in this is that *Dickensian* has itself inspired its own

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<sup>595</sup> BBC One, Premier, and Red Planet Pictures, *Dickensian Press Pack*, 2015. p.6.

<sup>596</sup> This term has been used in a number of ways since the publication of Dickens’s texts. It can mean ‘like’ a Dickens text or character as in the use as title to the BBC show. It has also been appropriated as an adjective describing a kind of mood or political space. Journalists and political pundits appropriate the term to describe poor working or living conditions, calling to mind the workhouse of OT or the slums of Tom-All-Alones in *BH*. However, the term is also used to describe Christmas and festive spirit, humour, and comedic caricature, calling to mind the joviality of Samuel Pickwick or Mr Fezziwig. The numerous uses of the term alone prove the mutability of the word and thus, the ways in which Dickens is referenced by culture.

<sup>597</sup> Pugh, p.65.



fanfiction. As of May 2016 the internet fanfiction database *Archive of Our Own* listed thirty works tagged with ‘Dickensian TV’. Of these, twenty-seven pieces were tagged as associated with the character of Arthur Havisham, a primary character in the television series from the character only mentioned in two chapters in the novel *GE*.<sup>598</sup> Likewise, the character of Compeyson, who appears a few times in the novel but most of his action is still pre-novel, was tagged in twenty-two of the thirty works on AO<sup>3</sup>.<sup>599</sup> Both characters’ parts in the television show are based on exposition from the novel, which feature in Chapters Twenty-Two and Forty-Two.<sup>600</sup>

This evidence of an appropriation of an appropriation, so to speak, shows how the television show has lent itself to the discussion of how Dickens’s characters can live outside of their novels. DeCerteau wrote of memory, ‘the “art” of memory develops a capacity to inhabit the space of the other without possessing it and to exploit this alteration of space without losing itself in the process [sic]’.<sup>601</sup> What DeCerteau is explaining is the archontic principle in cultural memory. When we apply that same principle to *Dickensian* and its own ‘spin-offs’, we could say that what *Dickensian* contributes to the Dickensian memory, or even the Dickensian franchise, the nature of the show could be explained as a ‘reboot’.

While we have seen that Dickens’s characters have lived outside their novels from their moment of inception, *Dickensian* is a reboot of the idea that these characters, in their afterlives, might still be disparate enough not to live on the same plane. In this reboot of our idea of what Dickensian is, the show is illustrating that

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<sup>598</sup> There was even a piece inspired by the actor who played Arthur Havisham in *Dickensian*, Joseph Quinn.

<sup>599</sup> AO<sup>3</sup> is the abbreviation for the internet database Archive Of Our Own.

<sup>600</sup> These parts of exposition are given by Herbert Pocket and Magwitch respectively. In the first, neither character is given a name but their relationship to Miss Havisham is established. In the second, Magwitch related the characters’ names and backgrounds but does not know the connection to Havisham. Both pieces together mean the readers get the full story. The details can be found in: Charles Dickens, *Great Expectations*, ed. by Deborah Lutz and Bernard Shaw (New York: Modern Library, 2001). pp.161-162 and pp.310-314.

<sup>601</sup> DeCerteau, p.41.

Dickens need not be adapted in single novel films in order to be understood as Dickens. Dickens is, in essence, his characters. The 'Dickensian' is also a memory of these characters; indeed it is these characters' very life in dialogue with one another, illustrated in the very nature of the show that is a new way of considering what is the Dickensian, what is Dickens.

The nature of the 'reboot' itself speaks to the archontic in cultural memory. As Lucas Somigli explains, "ret-cons" and "re-boots" are available to the audience at one and the same time [...] so that the "original" loses its status and becomes simply one of the many possible ways to articulate the myth'.<sup>602</sup> The 'reboot' itself further positions itself best within the narrative of a serial since it is, by nature, seeking to 'begin again' or set itself apart from another narrative. *Dickensian* places itself within the cultural memory of Dickens, his works, and his characters by anticipating narratives (in the Honoria Barbary plot line and the Amelia Havisham plot line), subverting others (by letting Little Nell survive), and assuming others have already occurred (Mr and Mrs Bumble are already married). At the same time, the show removes some narratives altogether, using the characters only without any aspects of their novel narratives; for example, Silas Wegg is made the landlord of the local pub rather than the manipulative reader and song-seller for the Boffins, and Mr Gradgrind is given a position within the workhouse system rather than education.

While the function of the 'reboot' is supposedly to create *tabula rasa*, since its nature is to be in dialogue with previous memories means that it cannot be separated from these very memories. As William Proctor explains, 'the audience cannot be

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<sup>602</sup> William Proctor, 'Beginning Again: The Reboot Phenomenon in Comic Books and Film', *Scan: Journal of Media Arts Culture*, 9 (2012), 1-12. p.1

rendered amnesiac'.<sup>603</sup> Proctor carries this explanation of the archontic aspect of the reboot by comparing the process to that of computer memory:

As with a computer's internal memory, rebooting the system does not signify total loss of data. Rebooting a franchise does not imply that its core memory is destroyed. In other words, pressing the reboot button does not eradicate the iconographic memory of the cultural product.<sup>604</sup>

Many 'reboots' are not created to be positioned against a single alternative narrative. Rather, 'reboots' are often created to be in conversation with an archive of narratives.<sup>605</sup>

Whether *Dickensian* continues on another network, as previous cancelled shows have been known to, or it remains in cultural history as a single twenty-episode treatment of Dickens's characters remains to be seen. However its concept of treating Dickens's characters as not beholden to their novels is not singular. In 2015, the latest *Assassin's Creed* game released by Ubisoft, placed the main characters in Victorian London. Some missions for the game were released as an addition called 'The Darwin and Dickens Conspiracy'. In this addition were a number of missions in which the main character, the 'Assassin', takes on jobs from Charles Dickens including missions titled 'An Artful Plan' and 'Our Mutual Friend'. The 'Our Mutual Friend' mission in particular features a Mister John Hammon and his fiancée Bella Wilton. The image in Figure 94 shows the instructions from the character John Hammon to the assassin Jacob Frye regarding Bella Wilton.

The game has taken the characters of John Harmon and Bella Wilfer from the novel *OMF*. The first task involving spying on the fiancée is almost exactly lifted from the novel. However, the continued tasks deviate. What the game has done, in

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<sup>603</sup> Proctor, p.2.

<sup>604</sup> Proctor, p.7.

<sup>605</sup> Proctor uses the examples of Superhero movies such as the *Batman* trilogy by Christopher Nolan being as reboot of the previous films by Tim Burton and Joel Schumacher as well as the published comic books and graphic novels. (Proctor, p.8-9).

creating characters with imitative names and initial similarities in plot but subsequent deviation, Ubisoft has contributed to the idea of taking Dickens's characters from their plots and positioning them into a different narrative universe. Some of the *Assassin's Creed* gamers may not be aware of the characters' association and thus the memory of these characters becomes beholden to the game's memory rather than Dickens's. However, as Proctor explains, 'the fact that they existed and still exist in the memory of the audience proves that autonomy is unlikely'.<sup>606</sup>



**Figure 94: Screen Capture from Assassin's Creed Syndicate: 'Our Mutual Friend' memory (2015). Image ©Ubisoft**

What we have seen in twenty-first-century popular culture is a direct reflection of the reading practices surrounding Dickens over the one hundred and fifty years of his novels' publications. Dickens's characters are continually appropriated in different material and textual manifestations. The accumulation of these appropriations contributes to the growing archive of these characters, and this

<sup>606</sup> William Proctor, 'Regeneration & Rebirth: Anatomy of the Franchise Reboot', *Scope: An Online Journal of Film and Television Studies*, 22 (2012), 1-19. p.10.

archive is firmly placed within culture. Although arguably anachronistic, reading these afterlives across different cultural time periods and cultural practices highlights rather than diminishes the archontic aspect of character afterlives.

The meme-like nature of Dickens characters can be traced to Dickens's own methods of characterisation. Dickens's characters' repetition and reiterations in popular culture and academic analysis proves that this very repetition, this mimetics, which some would use to dismiss Dickens characters is the very thing which has kept them alive in readers' memories. Dickens, more than any other writer, has been able to convey characters with these meme qualities into popular culture. While other authors like Jane Austen and Anthony Trollope have written novels which are also character-driven, these characters do not present afterlives as rich and varied as those of Dickens's characters. Austen's Mr Darcy, Conan Doyle's Holmes, or Emily Brontë's Heathcliff are characters which continually stand out in popular culture; however these characters can compete with neither the multiplicity nor the vastness of the afterlives of Dickens's *dramatis personae*.

The nature of Dickens's characters, the ways in which we can read them, and their ability to be both reverential and referential to their author and the Victorian era, demonstrate the ways in which literature self-perpetuates and adapts to different reading practises. The meme-like quality of Dickens's characters suggests a meme-like quality in cultural memory itself. We might take this reading of Dickens's characters and apply it to other authors to differentiate and understand how literature speaks to popular culture and contributes to an ever-expanding archive of its own.

Edmund Yates remembers of Charles Dickens, ‘What he created that he was. His personages were, as readers of his letters know, an integral part of his life.’<sup>607</sup> *Dickensian* and the use of characters in the Dickens missions of *Assassin’s Creed* illustrate how Dickens himself is actively remembered through his characters. The conversation covering how these characters are used and remembered continues to change, whether it is through fanfiction, dolls, television shows, video games, or cake. What remains consistent is that these characters are related in cultural memory in their various afterlives through Dickens and likewise Dickens is relatable through his characters. In essence, studying Dickens’s characters can show us not only *how* Dickens is remembered but also *why*.

Actor Stephen Rea who played the part of Inspector Bucket in *Dickensian* claimed in an interview, ‘Writers like Dickens and Shakespeare changed the world and altered our landscape. Whether we’ve read it or not we all seem to know the characters and the stories’.<sup>608</sup> And we will never forget.



**Figure 95: Cast of characters in *Dickensian*. Image ©BBC.**

<sup>607</sup> Collins, Vol.2, p.210.

<sup>608</sup> BBC One, Premier, and Red Planet Pictures, *Dickensian Press Pack*, 2015. p.9.

## 7. Appendix A: Letters Database

Appendix B is an Access Database of a selection of Letters and Memories. The Database is electronic and can be found on the enclosed CD.

Sources included in the database are:

Collins, Philip, ed, *Dickens: Interviews and Recollections, V.1*, (London: Macmillan Press, 1981), I

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----- *The Pilgrim Edition: The Letters of Charles Dickens*, ed. by Madeline House, Graham Storey and Kathleen Tillotson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), II

----- *The Pilgrim Edition: The Letters of Charles Dickens*, ed. by Madeline House and others (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974), III

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*Dickensian*, 5 (2005), 134-58
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*Dickensian*, 7 (2007), 37-59
- 'Supplement to The Pilgrim Edition: The Letters of Charles Dickens',



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- 'Supplement to The Pilgrim Edition: The Letters of Charles Dickens',  
*Dickensian*, 9 (2008), 140-58
- 'Supplement to The Pilgrim Edition: The Letters of Charles Dickens',  
*Dickensian*, 10 (2008), 236-46
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*Dickensian*, 11 (2009), 36-53
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*Dickensian*, 12 (2009), 135-53
- 'Supplement to The Pilgrim Edition: The Letters of Charles Dickens',  
*Dickensian*, 13 (2009), 225-39
- 'Supplement to The Pilgrim Edition: The Letters of Charles Dickens',  
*Dickensian*, 14 (2010), 42-58
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